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Strategies for Reducing Voluntary Employee Turnover in the Food Service Industry

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College of Management and Technology

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Jerahn D. Hyman

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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by

Jerahn D. Hyman

MBA, Ohio Christian University, 2015

BA, Ohio Christian University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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June 2020

Abstract

Owners of small food service businesses experience high levels of voluntary employee turnover causing loss of productivity and profit. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that foodservice business owners used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. A purposeful sample of 5 business owners of small food service businesses in the Midwest region of the United States participated in the study. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews as well as reviewing internal company documents such as employee surveys, training materials, and documented procedures. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with 4 themes emerging to include: consideration, knowledge sharing, effective leadership through leadership development, and strong teamwork dynamics. A key recommendation is that leaders should always strive to retain their employees through a concerted effort of exercising consideration and a willingness to evolve their managerial style to suit the needs of the food service industry and their workforce. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce turnover, which can result in increased profits for small business owners of foodservice businesses that, in turn, can support economic growth in local communities.

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Dedication

This research and doctoral study are dedicated to my late uncles—Sgt. James Sidney Savage and David Euguene Savage, Sr.—who taught their children, their grandchildren, their nieces and nephews, and myself the value of hard work and persistence, the importance of education, and that a strong work ethic together with Godly principles will open far more doors than one ever thought possible. I am grateful for the time they spent here on earth. They will be forever missed.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small business leaders have long found a problem with employees who decided to leave their positions, particularly when the positions vacated are staffed with highly qualified, highly trained individuals (Jung, Namkung, & Yoon, 2016). The effects of large percentages of turnover continue to unfold, but some of the adverse effects include low company morale, low job satisfaction, loss of experience and institutional knowledge, and low productivity (Hanushek, Rivkin, & Schiman, 2016).

Since small businesses account for a large sector of companies in the United States, it is critical that business leaders understand the negative effects of voluntary employee turnover to develop a response to this growing crises (Yang, 2012).

Background of the Problem

One of the most complicated challenges a small business leader will face is dealing with the growing trend of voluntary employee turnover (Lee, Fernandez, & Chang, 2018). Lee et al. (2018) found that learning the intention behind the employee's decision to leave was just as critical as the employee leaving. Faced with this fact and the fact that the work environment and stress were also leading factors of voluntary employee turnover (Kurniawaty, Ramly, & Ramlawati, 2019), it becomes evident why this subject has become a static issue in the academic arena. One researcher found that the cost of replacing employees at a lower pay was in excess of $3,600. As such, small business owners must ensure that they are managing turnover effectively (Keeling, McGoldrick, & Sadhu, 2013).

Problem Statement

Filling vacancies with qualified employees can be damaging to a company's profit margin (Hausknecht, 2017). Replacing an employee can cost small businesses up to 20% of the employee's estimated annual compensation (Wasilowski, 2018). The general business problem is that small businesses are losing qualified employees to voluntary employee turnover, resulting in profit loss. The specific business problem is some small food service business owners lack strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that foodservice business owners used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of small business owners of foodservice businesses in the Midwest region: five owners at five food service businesses who have demonstrated successful experience in retaining employees beyond 2 years. This study may support positive social change through increased profits that small business owners of foodservice businesses use to support a healthy and vibrant workforce and economic growth in local communities.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this study. Qualitative research is described as taking an exploratory approach to research by trying to achieve a deeper understanding of the topic and the participants involved (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2017). It is characterized by relating and understanding some aspect of participants' social life, experiences, and attitudes as opposed to analyzing numerical data (McCusker

& Gunaydin, 2015). Other methods of study include the quantitative and mixed methods, both of which were not suited for this study. In a quantitative study, the researcher attempts to classify and count information, which is then measured using statistical tools of analysis. This information is then used to examine the variables' relationships or groups' differences to understand better what is being observed (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Quantitative researchers rely on closed-ended questions and seek to examine a theory's relevance by testing statistical hypotheses. Since I needed to ask open-ended questions, and since I was not attempting to test hypothesis, the quantitative method was inappropriate (see Savela, 2018). A mixed-method involves combining the elements of statistical data collection and analysis with the mixed method to better understand complex phenomena (McKim, 2017). The mixed-method was not used for this study since variables were not selected and analyzed.

The design of this study was a multicase. A case study is recommended when the researcher is seeking to explore and explain a contemporary circumstance, all the while trying to understand a phenomenon through an observed set of behaviors (Yin, 2018). A multicase study is preferable when the investigator wants to obtain rich data about a specific phenomenon in a given population (Yazan, 2015). Since I believed the multicase study method would allow me to get the best information and a rich data set, I chose this design. A potential design not selected was an ethnographic study. Researchers use an ethnographic design when exploring organizations' or groups' cultures (Espig & de Rijke, 2018). Since I conducted interviews about retention strategies and not cultural phenomena, the ethnographic methodology was not appropriate. Researchers use a phenomenological study when attempting to identify events, focusing on lived experiences, and then attributing a phenomenon to those experiences (C. Adams & van Manen, 2017). Since the intent of this research study was to explore strategies from multiple sources rather than the meaning of the participant's lived experiences, this was not appropriate for this study.

Research Question

What strategies do food service business owners use to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

Interview Questions

1. How did you influence and motivate your employees to reduce voluntary employee turnover?
2. Did you find individual consideration to be effective at reducing voluntary employee turnover? If so, why was it effective?
3. How did you intellectually stimulate your employees, and did you find that to be an effective strategy for reducing voluntary employee turnover?
4. What other strategies did you find effective to reduce voluntary employee turnover?
5. What barriers did you face in addressing implementing these strategies?
6. How did you overcome those barriers?
7. Did leadership styles play a role in either causing or mitigating voluntary employee turnover?

8. Could you discuss the overall cause and effect of voluntary employee turnover?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework chosen for this study was the transformational leadership theory, developed in part by Burns in 1978. Burn’s work would later be expounded upon by theorist and scholar, Bass (Bass, 1985). Bass' (1985) further development of transformational leadership theory posited that leaders could effect change to the degree that they inspired their followers to change their perception and expectations of their workplace and roles. Bass (1985) discussed the idea that transformational leadership theory motivated employees to work toward a singular focus in accomplishing commonly established goals, which could build the morale and satisfaction needed to retain high-performing employees. The fundamental tenets that support this conceptual framework are: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation. To summarize these tenets, a transformational leader positively influences and inspires their followers, cultivates creativity and innovation, and fosters the personal development of their followers (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership theory could, therefore, be used to develop and implement strategies that owners could use to reduce voluntary employee turnover within foodservice businesses, reducing employment replacement and lost production costs.

Operational Definitions

Foodservice industry. Any company that is in the business of preparing food outside the home to include restaurants, cafeterias, and catering businesses (Johns & Pine, 2002).

Qualified employee. Any employee who has undergone the specific on-the-job training and who possess the requisite skills and experience to complete a job fully (Weil, 2015).

Unemployment rate. The percentage of unemployed workers in the total labor workforce (Blank & Edwards, 2019).

Voluntary employee turnover. An employee’s deliberate vacation of their job post with or without warning (Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron, & Hom, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

In research, an assumption is a condition that is accepted as true while the evidence of the truth may lack evidentiary support or the evidence is limited (Pyrczak, 2016). I identified two assumptions for this research. The first assumption was that members of the participant pool would provide detailed responses to the interview questions that were both honest and transparent about their business practices. The second assumption was that the interview questions chosen for this study would garner well-rounded insights into the participant's organizations in order to address strategies for reducing turnover in foodservice businesses.

Limitations

In research, a limitation is a weakness that can limit or even invalidate the results of the study, but is outside of the control of the researcher (Pyrczak, 2016). I identified two limitations for this research: (a) participants had differing managerial viewpoints and definitions of success; (b) the study included only current managers.

Delimitations

In research, a delimitation is a boundary (Pyrczak, 2016). I identified two delimitations for this research. The study was delimited to foodservice businesses and was confined to those in the Midwest.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that the findings could provide examples of successful strategies of food service business owners that helped to reduce voluntary employee turnover. Pravichai and Ariyabuddhiphongs (2018) showed that certain management strategies are effective at reducing voluntary employee turnover by creating a sense of ownership among employees within their respective organizations.

Contribution to Business Practice

The potential contribution of this study is to provide examples of successful strategies that foodservice leaders can use to increase the retention of employees by reducing voluntary employee turnover. By identifying strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover, owners can motivate and inspire their employees to take ownership of the work they do. The quality of employee outputs could increase, resulting in an increase in overall organizational performance (see Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2018).

Implications for Positive Social Change

The results of this study could contribute to positive social change by reducing economic instability caused by higher voluntary employee turnover and increasing overall community well-being through a d viable workforce. (see Q. Nguyen, Nisar, Knox, & Prabhakar, 2018). These results have the potential to foster strong economic growth within communities, which, in turn, can enhance community relations and increase incomes and thus improve the financial health of families and their communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This study explored strategies leaders within the foodservice industry have used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The purpose of this literature review was to analyze the current state of research on voluntary employee turnover reduction strategies to minimize high levels of turnover among workers. It’s purpose was also to conduct an extensive review of the literature on TLT and voluntary employee turnover and provide a critical analysis and synthesis of the various journals, reports, and seminal scholarly works related to the study. Journal articles from the peer-reviewed literature covered the following topics: voluntary employee turnover, the transformational leadership theory (TLT) to support the multiple case qualitative study, and causes of voluntary employee turnover, and its effect on the workplace.

The literature review includes the division into two categories: (a) focusing on transformational leadership theory and (b) focusing on employee retention and turnover. The following databases were used: ScienceDirect, Business Source Complete, SAGE Journals, Emeral Insight, Taylor and Francis Online, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Google

Scholar. The following keywords were used: *employee, voluntary employee turnover, transformational leadership theory, turnover, foodservice industry, costs, small business, leadership,* and *organizational efficacy.* The literature review is divided into sections that correlate with the overall study. The review included 233 references, 211 (90%) of which were peer-reviewed articles and 22 (10%) of which were non-peer-reviewed articles. Of the 211 peer-reviewed articles, 205 (97%) were published in the last 5 years.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Developed in the late 1970s, transformational leadership was the flagship work of Burns (Burns, 1978). His works have been expounded upon by several scholars, chief among them was Bass (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) illustrated that the behaviors and characteristics of a transformational leader are unique in that they are not an expressed exchange of commodities between a leader and their followers, but they are an exchange of personal values and beliefs.

Capitalizing on Burns' work, Stevens (2011) stated that Burn's objective is to use the four tenants of transformational leadership to elevate their followers in becoming capable and successful leaders. The four tenants of transformational leadership are idealized influence, which is better known as role modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Bass, 1985).

Burns' definition of leadership pursued the notion that leadership meant inducing the follower to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations of both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). Antonakis and Day (2018) agree with this adding that leaders are connected to followers as they act as independent forces that guide followers toward the organizational goals. Antonakis and Day also examine another critical area—transactional leadership in which they argued the nature of a transactional relationship between leaders and followers exchange valued items including political, economic, or emotional modal values or items. Transactional leadership is often viewed as the counterpart to transformational leadership and to some degree on opposite ends of the spectrum (Burns, 1978). Transactional leadership, which focused on the self-interest of one party or the other differs from transformational leadership, which was thought to have richer and more far-reaching goals (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership was viewed as a relationship in which the motivation, morality, and ethical aspirations of both the leader and followers are raised (Bass, 1985, 1999; Burns, 1978). Regarding the moral and ethical implications, transformational leadership seeks to raise the consciousness of followers in an effort to help them transcend their self-interest for the sake of the greater good (Antonakis & Day, 2018). In his original conception of transformational leadership, Burns (1978) failed to incorporate a concern for the leaders moral or ethical consciousness. However, after Bass (1985) built on Burns' theory, Bass eventually came around to agreeing with the postulations.

Transformational leaders are thought to be more internally directed. Transformational leaders tend to work outside of the rules of organizational culture by redefining and changing these rules based on their vision (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Followers change because they take on the leader's vision and because they believe the cause is worthy of sacrifice. The vision promotes an appealing and exciting solution in which the followers identify that vision with their own so much so that they pursue it zealously (Avolio, 2004).

The goal of transformational leaders should always be to transform the thinking of the followers so that they buy into the cause of the leader (Bass, 1985). As such, an effective transformational leader will learn how their followers best take direction and what it takes for them to thrive in and outside of the workplace (Bass, 1985). Munro and Thanem (2018) agreed with the Hibbert, Beech and Siedlok (2017) study in its application to leadership traits. Munro and Thanem (2018) argued that leaders should be of good moral character and in sound ethical standing. Much of the groundwork behind the transformational leadership theory stems from the idea that leaders with charisma deliver better results (House, 1977). House (1977) continued by arguing charismatic leader is one who inspires followers' motives to accomplish the leader's ideals and values. This framework was later adopted by Bass (1985), who introduced one of the major tenants of transformational leadership via what he called idealized influence.

Bass (1985) introduced four tenants to explain the behaviors of transformational leaders. These tenants are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Idealized influence is also known as charisma, which describes the demeanor and disposition of a leader (Zdaniuk & Bobocel, 2015). Zdaniuk and Bobocel (2015) describe idealized influence as a cornerstone of transformational leadership. Mathew and Gupta (2015) posited that charisma is a trait generally associated with transformational leadership and that this trait is a highly developed emotional skill. As an emotional skill, it is also associated with emotional intelligence, which is a necessary characteristic of transformational leaders. Transformational leaders use their emotions to convey their message and motivate their followers to attain the leader's vision. In addition to high emotional intelligence, a transformational leader will also possess self-motivation (Mathew & Gupta, 2015). Using these two characteristics, Mathew and Gupta assert that transformational leaders are then able to meet the emotional needs of their followers; this creates trust, which is a critical component to emotional intelligence.

Inspirational motivation, the second tenant, describes an authentic leader. A leader who connects well with others through stories—theirs and others to see the potential in their subordinates and to help them reach their full potential and to realize their dreams (Gilbert, Horsman, & Kelloway, 2016). Transformational leaders are expected to inspire their followers so that they can create constant change within their respective organizations (Hetland, Hetland, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2018). Leaders can inspire through motivation, creating a positive work environment, and by establishing trust amongst their followers (Jena, Pradhan, & Panigrahy, 2018). The transformational leader uses inspiration motivation to lead their followers through the notion that both the leader and the follower have a common goal and mission. This inspiration is also used to when the leader is attempting to develop the follower both personally and professionally (Barbînta, Dan, & Muresan, 2017).

It is this inspiration that allows leaders to bring about change in followers and the organization as a whole (Bass, 1999). Inspirational motivation is a tenant with many themes found within transformational leadership theory; interrelationships, organizational requirements, and leader-follower interdependence (Bottomley, Mostafa, Gould□Williams, & León□Cázares, 2016). While relationships are at the epicenter of the transformational leadership theory, it does not address all relationship types. Naysayers are challenging to communicate the vision with and are difficult to transform. For the followers who are subject to transform, the mutual trust between leader and follower allows the leader to instill a sense of ownership in the followers (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978).

The attributes of a transformational leader involve the leader being a visionary within their organization and being a catalyst and motivator. The TLT is about creating leaders who think long term and invoke an organizational sense of trust and mutual respect. The attributes of the TLT make them an ideal leader, powerful, innovative, ethical, and of sound moral standing (Bottomley et al., 2016; Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders have exceptional communication skills and marshal the vision of the organization with integrity and loyalty. The basis of TLT involves leader quality and developing leaders from followers. The leader empowers the followers to grow their loyalty to the organization. Honing the skills and leadership qualities of the followers is also part of the basis of TLT (Bottomley et al., 2016; Burns, 1978).

The third tenant, intellectual stimulation, shows scholars that leaders who positively influence and contribute to the intellectual growth and continued educational pursuits of their followers also consciously contribute to their subordinate's performance and overall success (Grégoris, Deschamps, Salles, & Sanchez, 2017). Intellectual stimulation is accomplished when the leader helps the subordinates think about and solve old problems in new ways (Bass, Waldman, Avolio, & Bebb, 1987). Followers get support through questioning their own beliefs and values and beliefs and values of their leaders, which is relevant when attempting to solve current problems that confront the organization (Bass et al., 1987). The premise of this tenant is that leaders foster an environment where they stimulate creativity and challenge followers to emphasize rational solutions by challenging old assumptions (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Seltzer & Bass, 1990). The effects of TLT indicate that followers would become more adept to using reasoning and evidence rather than unsupported opinions (Patiar & Wang, 2016).

The final tenant, individual consideration, defines a leader who takes the time to provide coaching and professional development on a one-on-one basis (Loughlin, Arnold, & Walsh, 2016). Individual consideration can also be a form a contingent reinforcement in that the leader provides both positive and negative feedback aimed to help develop the follower to learn from successes as well as mistakes (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Seltzer and Bass (1990) continued with the construct of individual consideration by further developing the definition, arguing that transformational leaders learn the abilities, needs, and aspirations of followers. By doing so, the leader is then able to develop followers into leaders (Avolio, 2004).

As a key construct of transformational leadership, in order to systematically develop and grow followers into leaders, a leader must understand the follower's capabilities and desires (Avolio, 2004; Bass, 1985). As the leader reshapes and prioritizes the needs of the follower to align with the overall vision of the organization, the follower learns and develops self-actualization (Avolio, 2004). The follower is also transformed in that they recognize that their needs are continuously being addressed through targeted coaching and mentoring approaches (Avolio & Bass, 1995).

In this section, the reader will be able to examine the history of the transformational leadership theory and many of the voices that were integral in the development of this theory into what it is today. We also discussed the four tenants (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) and the role they play in this theory and in leaders and followers who subscribe to it.

Transformational Leadership in Small Business

This section of the literature review will cover existing research of transformational leadership in the context of small businesses and how will provide support to the relationship of manager and employee and how that tenability is necessary for reducing turnover and ensuring employee retention.

Knowledge sharing. In learning and understanding how transformational leaders impact the workplace, research has shown that a key activity in making an impact in this realm of study is knowledge sharing (Rawung, Wuryaningrat, & Elvinita, 2015). Knowledge sharing refers to the social behavior of promoting and motivating the continual practice of knowledge creation (Rawung et al., 2015). Knowledge sharing is a two-dimensional practice that involves the collection and donation of knowledge (Paulin & Suneson, 2015; Ritala, Olander, Michailova, & Husted, 2015). While knowledge sharing is one aspect of transformational leadership, one should note that there are other topics related to the subject that are equally relevant.

Transformational leaders are continually seeking to challenge the status quo and build leaders. Higgs and Dulewicz (2016) posited that transformational leadership qualities had an ameliorating effect on overall firm performance. They also observed that when the highest level of management exhibited transformational behaviors that the firm had greater success. Empirical evidence shows that transformational leadership helps to facilitate innovation, competitiveness, high performance, and organizational learning within small and medium-sized firms (Vargas, 2015). Buil et al. (2018) argued that transformational leadership directly impacts employee job performance. Transformational leadership has other positive effects in the workplace, including work engagement partially mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance (Nawaz & Khan, 2016; Willis, Clarke, & O'Connor, 2017; Yasir & Mohamad, 2016).

Challenging the status quo is only part of what it means to be a transformational leader. Hetland et al. (2018) argued that transformational leadership and job crafting are linked. They argued that transformational leadership had a positive impact on employee job crafting, but conversely, they also argued that promotion focus was what had the most impact on the relationship on job crafting over transformational leadership.

Broader constructs of TLT. Buil et al. (2018) explains that transformational leadership is a broad topic that encompasses multiple facets and dimensions of the leadership process. He goes on to explain that transformational leaders attempt to motivate their subordinates to transcend to a place of beyond their self-interests. Buil et al. (2018) posit transformational leaders, through their vision, competence, and expression of ideas, that they can transform whole organizations and empower employees to take on that responsibility as well.

Transforming behavior creates a sense of ownership within employees. There is a relationship between his ownership and employee effectiveness. Cetin and Kinik (2015) argued that to be most effective, transformational leaders must be intentional about the behaviors they exhibit. An analysis of their work suggests that transformational leaders must be respected by their subordinates and that they must have a clear vision and show a sense of purpose. Rawung et al. (2015) posited that transformational leadership is most effective because it inherently poses long-term results as opposed to its transactional counterpart. Rawung et al. (2015) further argued that transformational leadership styles could create bonds between superior and subordinate. To solidify these points, Cekmecelioglu and Ozbag (2016) confirmed Rawung et al. (2015) in that transformational leaders seek to expose their subordinates' talents via their leadership style. Cekmecelioglu and Ozbag (2016) also posited that organization leaders could have an ameliorating effect on individual creativity by enhancing leader’s transformational leadership skills. In this analysis of four of the transformational leadership tenants, organizations were able to promote higher levels of productivity by activating an employee’s creativity (Cekmecelioglu & Ozbag, 2016).

Influencing and inducing innovation and creativity. Transformational leaders are continually seeking to influence their followers positively. Mesu, Sanders, and

Riemsdijk (2015) posited that transformational leadership only had a positive influence on employee performance in manufacturing SMEs. Mesu et al. (2015) argued that intensified transformational leadership behavior created transformational leaders that were more effective. Conversely, Mesu et al. (2015) also indicated that supervisors in service SMEs do not have to combine transformational leader behavior with a given decision style to be more effective at motivating their employees.

In creating an environment conducive to ingenuity, Dunne, Aaron, McDowell, Urban, and Geho (2016) posited transformational leaders are better equipped to foster innovation from employees as they are more responsive to the employee's needs. They argue that transformational leaders assert performance confidence, which is an essential factor when assessing new product innovation. Dunne et al. (2016) agreed with Cekmecelioglu and Ozbag (2016), who also argued that transformational leadership behavior was conducive to innovation in the workplace.

Researchers believe that transformational leaders are crucial in small businesses. Dunne et al. (2016) argued that the transformational leaders in small businesses factor into how employees create innovation within companies. Dunne et al. (2016) posit that small businesses suffer from a lack of innovation due to poor leadership. While Dunne et al. (2016) argue that many factors were conclusively related to an organization's success, it indicated that leadership style, negotiation style, and organizational efficacy were all critical when it came to product innovation. While Dunne et al. (2016) did not specifically address all types of leadership styles, the premise agrees with Rawung et al. (2015).

Affective leadership. Next, we examine how approaching leadership through a different lens can result in different outcomes. Hibbert et al. (2017) looked at leadership through a different lens. The researcher's focus on each lens delivers a different result. Since leadership is fluid, one must first understand how the leader is applying their leadership (Hibbert et al., 2017). To summarize, these principles help scholars to understand better how researchers can address the pros and cons of transformational leadership and the effects that this leadership style has on the followers. Hibbert et al. (2017) posited that these different lenses often called experiences, allow the leader to take a step back and examine how effective they are being.

In performing their day-to-day duties, leaders or managers must also (in order to be good leaders) be "affective." The term “affective” deals with the type of interaction leaders have with followers and how that leadership then transfers something intangible to that follower. Munro and Thanem (2018) argued that being an "affective" leader could be accomplished through various means, chief among them being direct action.

Transformational leaders have varied effects on their followers, many of which go unexplored. Ng (2017) argued that transformational leaders could affect employees in five different mechanisms. First, the "affective" mechanism which focuses on the followers’ positive emotional experience under the leader’s direction. Second, the motivational mechanism which focuses on the followers’ confidence and excitement in completing their work. Third, the identification mechanism which focuses on the influence the transformational leader has on the followers’ value beliefs. Fourth, the social exchange mechanism which focuses on the social exchange between the follower, the transformational leader, and the organization. Finally, the justice enhancement mechanism which focuses on the trust the follower has in their leaders and their job efforts.

Measuring professional quality. Transformational leadership spans into many sectors of business, and in doing so, it is gauged by different factors across multiple gears of understanding. Andersen, Bjørnholt, Bro, and Holm-Petersen (2018) argued that this type of leadership is measured through professional quality. This measurable indication of work completed is often associated with another popular leadership style—transactional leadership style.

Andersen et al. (2018) argued that a positive degree of shared understanding of professional quality, like other aspects of quality, dictates the amount of quality that exists when employees feel like they are producing and performing at their highest (Andersen et al., 2018; Fischer, 2016; Hoch, Bommer, Dulebohn, & Wu, 2018).

Transformational leadership can be addressed by viewing the framework against multiple applications. Lee and Kuo (2019) posited that transformational leadership behavior was responsible for employee motivation, inspiration, work quality, and work concentration. Lee and Kuo (2019) recommended that leaders take inventory of their respective work atmospheres and engage employees using transformational leadership behavior and use that behavior to transform their workforce.

There are many factors to consider when relying on the skill of a transformational leader, including emotional support. Niessen, Mäder, Stride, and Jimmieson (2017) posit that the force of transformational leadership allowed leaders to motivate those followers who were perceived to be emotionally exhausted. While under the charge of a transformational leader, Niessen et al. (2017) found that task mastery was not affected.

Transformational leadership style has been proven to support the leader/follower relationship and has been shown to have an ameliorating effect both in respect to organizations and individuals. T. Nguyen, Mia, Winata, and Chong (2017) argued that the transformational leadership style has a direct and positive effect on the leader/follower relationship. T. Nguyen et al. (2017) also posit that when the transformational leadership style is employed, reward systems to promote productivity and efficiency are not required.

Creating systemic organizational change. It is not far off to associate transformational leaders with the expectation that they will enter an organization and create meaningful change that will have both a positive effect on the leader as well as the followers within the organization. Phaneuf, Boudrias, Rousseau, and Brunelle (2016) posit that a leader leans towards creativity and innovation when the organizational context does the same thing. Phaneuf et al. (2016) engage the notion that transformational leaders can adapt to their environment and thus create an innovating environment through intellectual stimulation.

In the pursuit to understand the merits of transformational leadership, researchers are continually attempting to link positive effects on employees via transformational leadership. Ghasabeh, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015) found that leaders that exhibit transformational leadership behaviors daily have seen positive work engagement. The study indicated that employees' performance increases when their supervisors boost their optimism through transformational leadership behaviors.

For transformational leaders to evolve, Bass (1985) argued that leaders needed to challenge the status quo in order to develop intellectual stimulation. Boies, Fiset, and Gill (2015) posited that both inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation leadership behaviors have an ameliorating effect on leader/follower relationships and the overall team dynamic.

Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, and Gutermann (2015) argued that of the four tenets, idealized influence has the weakest impact on leader performance, and inspirational motivation had the most substantial impact. The study indicated that leaders who focused on idealized influence are more likely to act as role models, while those who focused on inspirational motivation were more, likely to motivate, foster optimism, and inspire their followers. In all, these findings are congruent with Boies et al. (2015), T. T. Nguyen et al. (2017), and Hoch et al. (2018): transformational leaders create positive relationships between themselves and their followers.

In this section, the researcher discussed general themes of transformational leadership theory, including knowledge sharing, broader constructs of the theory, how leaders influence and induce innovation and creativity, and affective leadership. Furthermore, the researcher discussed how leaders measure professional quality and how leaders create lasting systemic organizational change using the constructs of transformational leadership theory.

Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

A common theme in research on transformational leadership is job satisfaction. Researchers have been long trying to understand the link between transformational leadership style and other leadership styles and overall job satisfaction. This section of the literature review will focus specifically on the nature of transformational leadership and job satisfaction and will provide empirical evidence and support to understand better how managers can prevent turnover.

Link to job satisfaction. Kouni, Koutsoukos, and Panta (2018) were able to link job satisfaction to transformational leadership. This link was accomplished through the leader's high level of motivation and compounded by the employee's need for recognition, achievement, assumption of responsibility, autonomy, and self-actualization. An employee's job satisfaction was marked by various factors, chief among them, the relationship between the employee and the manager.

While applicable to many organizations, small business leaders must capitalize on their efforts in order to be useful in developing strategies that promote retention. Abelha, da Costa Carneiro, and de Souza Costa Neves Cavazotte (2018) investigated to see if a transformational leadership style had a positive effect on employee job satisfaction. The results agree with those of Kouni et al. (2018), but also through the study, these researcher's surmised that women were more susceptible to transformational leadership and responded with higher levels of satisfaction than their male counterparts in similar roles.

Effective leadership. Other researchers have sought to understand if gender held a significant role in leadership capabilities. The researcher's, as mentioned earlier, found that it was female employees who were influenced more by transformational leadership. Congruently Alghamdi, Topp, and AlYami (2018) also found that gender played a role in the transformational leadership, but this study found male leaders who exhibited transformational leadership behaviors were more deemed to have been more effective.

Nazim (2016) completed a correlation study to understand the mediating effects of transformational leadership and job satisfaction and found that a correlation existed between managerial behavior and employee job satisfaction. Nazim’s (2016) study examined the causal relationship between follower and superior and found that transformational leaders tend to initiate change, which does well to promote job satisfaction and, employee professional development and growth.

Not all employees respond the same to any given style of leadership, and this response can determine how effective a leader or manager’s strategies are in the workplace. Hildenbrand, Sacramento, and Binnewies (2018) conducted a study on 148 employees across multiple job functions. This study's purpose was to examine whether there was a perceived difference in an employee's disposition under the transformational leadership style. Since employee reactions moderated the relationships, the researchers took a qualitative approach to the study. They were able to ascertain the causes of these employees' behaviors and track how they reacted to the model of leadership that was defined in the onset of the study. The results of the study indicated that when a leader exhibits transformational leadership behavior, they can mitigate burnout in followers;

however, this is contingent on the follower's personality. These results agreed with Strukan, Nikolic, and Sefic (2017) and Kundu and Lata (2017).

Gauging the effectiveness of a transformational leader can often influence the followers' job satisfaction (Jin, Seo, & Shapiro, 2016). Jin et al. (2016) argued that a transformational leader's behavior could either promote or constrain the degree to which they could perform as a transformational leader. Jin et al. (2016) contended that leaders who are highly satisfied with their jobs are more inclined to engage in transformational leadership behavior than those who are not. Jin et al. (2016) posit that effectiveness as a transformational leader is directly related to their affective state.

Impact on business improvement. Strukan et al. (2017) did a study of transformational leadership; researchers assess the nature of business and how that has an impact on business processes and overall business improvement. The researchers showed financial improvement, and overall employee disposition was improved when transformational leadership style was utilized. One remarkable fact was that more attention was given to the task the employees were assigned and not the employees themselves. After the study, the researchers recommended that the managers of the company that was used in the study take stock in employee career goals as well as long-term company goals.

Elgelal and Noermijati's (2015) quantitative study on transformational leadership placed their focus on three areas: employee motivation, employee satisfaction, and employee performance. The researcher looked at these areas to assess to see how well a transformational leadership style influenced employees in these areas. The conclusion showed that transformational leadership had a positive effect on employee motivation and employee satisfaction. The research was not able to conclude that the transformational leadership style had a positive effect on employee performance. However, the researchers were able to gauge if job satisfaction influenced employee satisfaction, and that showed positive. This study agrees with Koedel and Xiang (2017) in that transformational leadership can influence employee retention.

As the relationship between leader and follower develop, ensuring followers are satisfied with their job and do not have an intention to leave their positions becomes an increasing concern for small and medium business leaders (Buttner & Lowe, 2017). Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey (2013) posited that the existence of a positive relationship between leader and follower was a factor in overall job satisfaction. They also argued that the trust a follower had in their leader was also a factor in overall job satisfaction. According to Braun et al. (2013), these factors were crucial in mitigating employee intention to leave their positions.

Transformational leaders attempt to push their followers to be proactive in the workplace. One way this is accomplished is through job crafting. Bruning and Campion (2018) argue that job crafting is the structural, social, or cognitive change that employees implement in their work where the intention is to improve their job for themselves. Transformational leaders encourage their followers to exploit opportunities where they can enrich themselves and their jobs by finding ways to challenge them to grow. This opportunity exploitation can be accomplished through learning and adapting new skills, adopting new processes, developing mentoring relationships, and building team morale (Wang, Demerouti, & Le Blanc, 2017).

Transformational leaders believe that placing the onus of job satisfaction on the employee can mitigate voluntary employee turnover (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Employees who develop relationships with other employees and employees who feel as if they are working with well rounded, warm individuals find satisfaction in their work (Bufquin, DiPietro, Orlowski, & Partlow, 2017).

The section of the literature review reviewed the link between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. There was further discussion on effective leadership and the impact that motivation has on business improvement.

Employee Retention

Leaders must be cognizant of the leadership process, and that includes facing the realities of employee retention. Employee retention would inevitably be the goal of this research; this section of the literature review will examine empirical evidence related to this topic. This section will explore the underlying nature of employee retention, what researchers have discovered in the pursuit of scholarly data, and evidence of what is and is not working across the field.

The human resource factor. Johennesse and Chou (2017) examined the hiring practices of human resource personnel. The researchers wanted to explore how talent management processes contributed to effective performance management. At the core of this study, Johennesse and Chou (2017) wanted to explore how the beginning stages of the hiring process played a role, if any, into employee retention. The study used empirical data, interviews, and other conceptual approaches to conduct the research and aims to let companies in on the loop of how their hiring practices can show a return when turnover is lower. It concludes that high rates of turnover can be fundamentally damaging to business processes, profits, the rates of unemployment, and host of other economic conditions that can be affected as well (Johennesse & Chou, 2017).

Rose and Raja (2016) also explored the indicators of retention from a human resources perspective and found that employees have ever-changing professional aspirations and those aspirations are directly related to employees and if they feel fulfilled in their work. The basis of the study was grounded in HR practices, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment to managing employee retention (Rose & Raja, 2016).

Like Johennesse and Chou (2017), Rose and Raja (2016) aimed to improve HR practices on a global scale and suggest that if HR practices were above reproach, then employees would remain happy and not want to leave the organization. Understanding employee retention should be examined through other vehicles such as incentive. In one study, Koedel and Xiang (2017) researched how leadership style and how managers influence employees and if that influence is enough to keep the employee engaged in the work they do. This study explored the concepts surrounding the idea that employee retention can be capitalized if the employee was incentivized to remain employed with their respective organization. The findings showed that if fringe benefits were appealing enough, it would be enough to keep employees from parting with their employers.

Sarmad, Ajmal, Shamim, Saleh, and Malik (2016) recognized that two indicators of retention were based on the employee's compensation and benefits. The study showed that while other factors were of concern to the employee, one of the biggest was the employee's salary. The data was analyzed using a multiple regression model, and after the study, the researchers found the greatest motivator to be compensation. In the same respect, the study included methods and strategies that can improve and boosts employee retention. The basis of the study was to bring light to HR practices and how improved HR relations has an ameliorating effect on employee retention. Conclusively, this study agrees with both Rose and Raja (2016) and Johennesse and Chou (2017), both of which emphasized retention with human resource departments.

Employee engagement. HR practices are not the only business practices that contribute to employee retention. The term "employee engagement" while still loosely defined, Mone and London (2018) poses that this term can refer to (a) psychological state engagement; (b) behavioral engagement; and (c) trait engagement.

Hewlett, Rashid, and Sherbin (2017) researched the effects of disengagement. The study explored the ramifications that occur when employees perceive their managers to be unfair in the treatment of all employees. The study showed that when employees perceive this, they tend to disengage and eventually leave the organization. According to statistics employee disengagement costs US corporations between $450 billion to $550 billion per year. The study indicated that disengagement leads to employees becoming angry and burned out and, in the process, employees look to leave a company. That inclination is the first stage of rising turnover rates, lost productivity, and eventually leaving the company (Hewlett et al., 2017).

Carnahan, Kryscynski, and Olson (2017) conducted a study to explore how corporate social responsibility plays a role in employee retention. The study stated that retention could be contingent on the benefits that the organization offers in terms of CSR. The researchers aimed to prove that companies that place a significant focus on corporate social responsibility have less turnover. The results of the study indicated that if employees feel that their organization is apt to self-governance and the impacting community, then they can better align themselves with the goals of that company and would feel less compelled to seek work elsewhere.

Younge and Marx (2016) completed a study that indicated that retention in companies could be improved by the use and enforcement of noncompetition agreements. These agreements state that upon separation with a company an employee is not allowed to work in a similar position or start a business using the knowledge gained from the previous employer as this could create an unfair competitive advantage.

Depending on the state, noncompete agreements are typically hard enough to enforce, and some states such as California do not allow noncompete clauses in employment contracts due to their difficulty to legally enforce (Younge & Marx, 2016). The study suggests that if employers were more serious about pursuing legal action against former employees who breached said clauses or if they made a more significant issue at the onset of employment it could stave the number of employees who left any given organization (Younge & Marx, 2016). While a different take on retention methods, one must consider all avenues in the course of the research.

Covella, McCarthy, Kaifi, and Cocoran (2017) conducted a study to explore the relationship between the leader and the employee and see whether employee retention was in the hand of the leader. In this study, several theories were put to the test, including social exchange theory and leader-member exchange. These two theories have similar facets, but one considers the surrounding social influences. Like Transformation Leadership Theory, Covella et al. (2017) suggest that LMX and SET are leadership theories that can influence an employee. The caveat is to learn which theory if any affects turnover or retention. This study correlates and agrees with Kouni et al. (2018), Abelha et al. (2018), and Cetin and Kinik (2015) all of whom suggest that leadership styles have an ameliorating effect on employee retention, performance, and product innovation.

Kundu and Lata (2017) completed that study which explores how an employee responds to an organizational-sponsored supportive work environment. This study delves into employees needs and if they feel as though their managers are hearing them. The study focuses on the notion that a supportive work environment can be a predictor in employee retention. The study goes on to explore the conditions that are present in a supportive work environment and how the factors of that environment translate into the numbers when it comes to employee retention.

This section of the literature review covered two broad topics in greater detail. The discussion was aimed at reviewing how human resources play a role in employee retention and how employee engagement played a role in employee retention. From this discussion, we gather significant correlations between human resources, employee engagement, and corporate social responsibility as beads of the thread that make up employee retention.

Employee Turnover

To gain insight on the concept of employee turnover, this section of the literature view examines the underlying causes, mitigating and aggravating factors, as well as strategies that have been empirically proven to substantiate the body of this research.

Causes of voluntary employee turnover. Khan and Aleem (2014) conducted a study in which they explored the reasons surrounding voluntary employee turnover and many of those reasons, per the study, surrounded employee job satisfaction. In this study, the researchers measured certain areas of job satisfaction, including but not limited to pay, promotion, job safety and security, and the nature of the work. The research concluded by providing areas (as listed previously) in which managers and captains of industry can better satisfy employees to stave off voluntary employee turnover.

An East China study conducted by Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, and Yang (2015) explored how stress and burnout were factors that contributed to voluntary employee turnover. The study showed that employees who were under immense amounts of stress were more likely to become dissatisfied with their employers and choose to find other employment.

The study concluded acknowledging that the stress factors involved in one’s personal life, self-efficacy, and work stress were all significant factors in what lead to the voluntary employee turnover of certain qualified employees.

A study conducted by researchers Lee, Hom, Eberly, Li, and Mitchell (2017) showed that over the past decade numerous articles had been published in journals in multiple fields examining the nature of volitional turnover. The study examines four different areas. These areas, while broad, support the notion that volitional turnover is preventable given the right set of variables. These areas include probing the turnover process, studying the role that an employee's choice plays in the matter, investigating the influences behind those decisions to leave or stay and opening the discussion behind the collective turnover process supporting both Yu et al. (2015) and Khan and Aleem (2014).

Job dissatisfaction. A growing concern for many small business leaders is voluntary employee turnover. However, some might argue that job scarcity can impact the rate at which employees left their positions. Lee et al. (2018) argued that job dissatisfaction was the leading causes of voluntary employee turnover. They argued that there were two types of turnover—quitting and transferring. They found no statistical evidence to support the notion that job scarcity mitigated employees transferring to more desirable positions. Lee et al. (2018) also argued that when job scarcity was low, that employees were more apt to quit rather than wait for an opportunity to transfer to a different position.

Lee and Sturm (2017) posited that job dissatisfaction often leads employees to consider if their position is a job that they intend on making into a career. Once the employee receives a job offer, they must take a personal inventory to understand if the potential job can give them the experience they desire to acquire or if they are going to be entering a similar situation. Lee and Strum (2017) suggested that if an employee regrets taking a similar previous position, they will have developed post-decision regret. This dictates that one will not gain happiness by taking a similar job to a previous job of the same nature that made them unhappy.

Addressing voluntary employee turnover in the correct context is vital to research when trying to differentiate the types of voluntary employee turnover. Becton, Carr, Mossholder, and Walker (2017) argued that voluntary employee turnover comes in two different forms—functional and dysfunctional. Functional voluntary employee turnover is where the company is losing poor performers—dysfunctional voluntary employee turnover is where good performers are leaving. Becton et al. (2017) posited that increased dysfunctional voluntary employee turnover has exceedingly negative consequences on an organization.

Jill, Michael, and Alison (2016) followed Akgunduz and Eryilmaz (2018), arguing job insecurity is a factor in turnover. They also argue that lack of benefits, sparse growth opportunities, and work that involves menial and rudimentary task also contribute to low job satisfaction, which leads to higher turnover.

In this section of the literature review, there was a discussion on employee turnover and the causes of voluntary employee turnover, job dissatisfaction, and how these play a role in employee turnover. Furthermore, multiple studies were examined to harness a picture of the effects of voluntary employee turnover and small businesses.

Food Service Industry

This section of the literature review will explore the specifics of the foodservice industry and how this sector of business is affected by voluntary employee turnover. This section contains an extended discussion on industry policy, regulations, and how leaders in this industry combat the many obstacles that hinder successful small businesses from thriving, including voluntary employee turnover.

Climate of the industry. Jung and Yoon (2016) asserted that working in the foodservice industry can be stressful in and of itself, but Bufquin et al. (2017) argued that workers in the foodservice industry perform better and retain their jobs longer when they like their coworkers. Other factors that pose threats to talent retention in the foodservice industry include the leader's managerial style, the structure of the organization, technological capabilities, the leader's strategic vision, and how much the owner is involved in the business (Adnan, Rahman, & Ahmad, 2018).

The restaurant industry, like other industries, relies on customer experience (Shapoval, Pizam, & Ellis, 2016). Furthermore, customer orientation or the degree to which an employee is willing to go to satisfy customer trends with high levels of customer satisfaction. Lo, Awang, Jusoh, Nor, and Soehod (2018) argued that within the restaurant industry, the industry is heavily driven by the patron dining experience and emotions related to relationship quality. Lemy, Goh, and Ferry (2019) posit that relationship quality is a direct determinant of customer loyalty, which is an essential element of the foodservice industry.

Jang, Zheng, and Bosselman (2017) argued that in addition to strong leadership, the foodservice industry requires stakeholder engagement, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction to survive. In contrast, Kwok, Huang, and Hu (2016) posited that consumers, on the other hand, are more interested in an organization's green initiatives.

While not a heavily researched arena (Jang et al., 2017), the argument posed has been addressed by several researchers seeking to explore and understand the relationship between top-level managers and sustainability in the foodservice industry. To that end, Bonn, Cronin, and Cho (2015) argued that consumers find trust in businesses that are conscious of green and organic initiatives are more likely to consume from those establishments.

Another area to assess is the current climate of the foodservice industry, which Lee (2017) is dependent on factors within the individual businesses. He argues that frontline employees who are younger and hold relatively little experience are not interested in innovation are also not interested in change. It held that age, experience, and education were all factors in the climate of the organization. In a subsequent study, Joung, Choi, and Taylor (2018) found that full-time employees were less likely to leave their positions over their part-time counterparts, suggesting that turnover intention can be linked to employment status which agrees with Lee (2017).

Customer Service/Satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has always been a large part of foodservice development and success (Q. Nguyen et al., 2018). Solnet, Ford, and McLennan (2018) argued that staff turnover does not harm employee attitudes, but that it does have an impact on consumer satisfaction. The impact is that retained employees drive customer satisfaction.

Ivkov et al. (2016) argued that there was a general lack of creativity and innovation in the foodservice industry. While this, as supported by empirical evidence, Lee, Hallak, and Sardeshmukh (2016) found that innovation within the foodservice industry has a positive impact on a restaurant's performance.

Researchers have looked at other areas within the foodservice industry in a growing effort to define the means to which a small business will or will not survive. Keyser, Clay, and Marella (2017) argued that customer satisfaction determined the survivability and prosperity of small businesses in this industry while Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, and Bujisic (2015) posited the same construct.

Policy and Regulation. Like many industries, the foodservice industry must accommodate government regulations as well. Researchers have often pondered the effects that government regulations have on this industry. The FDA (1998) controls almost 80% of food products through more than 15 agencies and 35 laws and statutes. The state of public health holds a significant foothold in the influence of federal regulations as many in the field are focused on the health concerns of the general public. Roache, Platkin, Gostin, and Kaplan (2017) argued that poor diets are one of the leading causes of the rise in chronic disease while Grégoris et al. (2017) argue that contamination creates more concern for consumers.

Other aspects to consider in the food industry are the growing trends in sustainability. As mentioned, Bonn et al. (2015) argued that consumers are starting to decide their patronage on a business's efforts in sustainability. Kim, Yoon, and Choi (2016) affirm this finding by arguing that this has to do with the consumer's morals. Lee, Kim, Bae, Kim, and Lee (2016) explained that the food industry could serve consumers better if they were more adept to information sharing and valued symbiotic relationships.

Turnover in the Food Service Industry. In terms of turnover, this study wants to address strategies that owners can employ to reduce turnover, specifically in the foodservice industry. This section of the literature review will focus specifically on the foodservice industry. While much of the literature dictates that (Bruning & Campion, 2018) job satisfaction is one of the more significant factors for employee turnover, Han, Bonn, and Cho (2016) argue in contrast that customer incivility is a significant factor in turnover and employee intentions to leave their jobs. Sharma and Singh (2016) agree in that they posit that workplace incivility negatively affects job satisfaction and is a factor that increases turnover intention in the foodservice industry. This is bolstered by Beehner and Blackwell (2016), Jill et al. (2016), and Joung et al. (2018), and Hur, Moon, and Han (2015) who posited that consumer incivility leads to emotional burnout, employee incivility, poor sales performance, absenteeism, tardiness, low job satisfaction, and psychological strain.

DiPietro and Bufquin (2018) posited that turnover in the foodservice industry is a combination of the interactions between managers and employees, and the employees' ability to work desired shifts. Their study provides that employees who can work desirable schedules are more satisfied in their jobs are less likely to leave their positions. Bufquin et al. (2017) also posit that managers that show concern for their employees are less likely to see turnover on their teams. Conversely, Jang, and Kandampully (2018) found that turnover intention could be reduced when leaders managed using the principles of servant leadership. Congruently, Tang et al. (2015) posited that managers who exhibited ethical behavior in their management practices are less likely to see turnover in their teams.

These findings suggest that the relationship between employees and managers are a critical factor in assessing whether turnover intention exists. In alignment with DiPietro and Bufquin (2018), Jang and Kandampully (2018), and Tang et al. (2015), Purba, Oostrom, Born, and Van Der Molen (2016) argued that trust between supervisors and employees reduced turnover intentions and bolstered teamwork and work performance.

Researchers had also shown that turnover intention increased when job security was not a factor (Akgunduz & Eryilmaz, 2018). They also found that the stronger, the intention was the more mediocre employee performance measured. Tews, Michel, and Stafford (2018) argued that an essential factor to consider in terms of turnover and retention, specifically in the food industry, is employee relationships with one another. Tews et al. (2018) posit that employee relationships influence turnover. Employees with predominately negative relationships with their coworkers are more likely to leave their positions while employees with positive relationships with their coworkers tended to retain their jobs longer.

This section of the literature explored the current climate of the industry, and that extends to voluntary employee turnover. Further, this section adds to the discussion of customer service and customer satisfaction and how that plays a role in employee job satisfaction, which contributes to decisions of staying or leaving a job. Finally, this section explored policy and regulation in the industry, employee turnover and how both of these are overarching factors in the industry as a whole as well as the "voluntary" aspect of voluntary employee turnover.

Summary and Transition

Section 1 of this study consisted of the problem and purpose statement, the nature of the study, and the research question. It also included the interview questions and the conceptual framework. This section also included the operational definitions, assumptions, limitations and delimitations and the significance of the study. Finally, this section included a review of the professional and academic literature.

In Section 2, I provide a restatement of the purpose statement, discussions on my role as the researcher, the participants, the population, sampling methods, and the ethical implications of the study. I discuss and justify the research method and design, the plan, and procedures for capturing data, organizing, and analyzing the data. Finally, Section 2 will conclude with a discussion of how I plan to achieve reliability and validity.

Section 3 will include the study findings, a discussion on the application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and the conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that foodservice business owners implement to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The targeted population consisted of five small foodservice businesses owners, located in the Midwest region of the U.S., who successfully implemented strategies for retaining employees beyond 2 years. The potential social change impact of this study is that foodservice business leaders may reduce unemployment rates. If the foodservice industry can reduce voluntary employee turnover, they can bring about increased economic output and provide a better quality of life for employees, while stimulating community growth.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, I served as the primary data collection instrument (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I was also responsible for recruiting participants, establishing and developing interview questions, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I used semistructured interview questions and provided a protocol for the interview process. The semistructured interview is useful when attempting to extract rich detail about experiences (Pathak & Intratat, 2016).

As part of any research, ethical considerations are paramount (Munhall, 1988). I ensured that this research conformed to the standards set forth by the *Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). No research was conducted until approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval No. is 01-

15-20-0673166). The Belmont Report stipulates that care be taken when subjecting human participants to research protocols. This care includes exercising respect for person, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). These protocols were adopted for this study. An informed consent form detailing the risks and benefits was obtained from each participant prior to conducting any research.

I worked in the foodservice industry for 3 years, but did not hold any managerial positions. My experience as a frontline worker could have shaped my thought processes about this research. I had no relationships with anyone who was selected to participate in this study. Research procedures can provide rich, objective data and mitigate bias (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). The interview protocol for this study ensured consistency and efficacy in data collection(Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) and mitigated bias. Researcher bias can misrepresent what the participants are attempting to convey (Wadams & Park, 2018). Researcher bias can occur depending on how the sampling is chosen, how the questions are structured, or the lens through which the researcher views the problem (Wadams & Park, 2018). To mitigate bias, researchers can employ several methods, including bracketing, structured interviews, peer-reviewing, member checking, working inductively, and critical reflexivity (Wadams & Park, 2018). Qureshi, Shaikh, and Malhi (2018) recommended the use of the bracketing technique. Base on this recommendation, I used the bracketing technique to mitigate bias. In bracketing, the researcher sets aside their perceptions through field notes or journaling and assessing the data gathered outside of their lens (Qureshi et al., 2018).

A well-developed interview protocol can help guide the researcher to obtain rich and insightful data while not wasting both the interviewer or the interviewee's time (Thomas, 2017). An interview protocol is also essential when attempting to maintain a sense of uniformity and continuity (Caretta, 2016). The conditions of qualitative research make it very easy for a researcher to commit unintentional omissions and commissions, which can impugn the credibility and validity of their studies (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). During the member checking process, researchers can work directly with research participants to ensure interview accuracy (Harvey, 2015). Consequently, member checking will support the appropriate interpretation of the participants responses for this study.

Participants

The participants were chosen purposively to meet the criteria needed to obtain data from owners who effectively implemented strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in the foodservice industry. The population sample consisted of five small business owners of foodservice businesses located in the Midwest region of the U.S. who had demonstrated successful experience in retaining employees beyond two years. It is essential to choose participants that meet the criteria necessary for data gathered to support and align with the overarching research question (Saunders & Townsend, 2018).

To gain access to the participants, I searched for organizations to participate using various resources, including the Internet, the phonebook, and the chamber of commerce. Once I obtained a list of viable organizations, I contacted the small business owners to determine if they met the criteria of the study before proceeding. Once I was successful at getting permission to proceed, I obtained the names and contact information for the owner(s) or other executive decision-makers. I then contacted the individuals via email and invited each of them to participate in the study. Before confirming their availability, I verified that the participants were eligible based on the criteria mentioned above as prescribed by White and Hind (2015) in a study on participant selection. I verified with the owner of the business that the business has been established for at least two years.

Building trust with the participants is necessary because the relationship between the researcher and the participant is paramount for delivering a successful research product (Guillemin et al., 2018). To build this trust, I remained as transparent as possible with the participants without compromising the integrity of the research or without contaminating the sampling, in addition, I ensured their confidentiality during the interview process. The participants were able to ask clarifying questions about the purpose of the study as well as review my notes during and after the interview. This developed trust, respect, and communication, which are critical in developing a working relationship with each participant (Abma & Stake, 2014). To ensure transparency, I shared all relevant details regarding the study and explained the process I intend to use to conduct the research. Surmiak (2018) describes how building trust with participants is the cornerstone of any research endeavor. Boddy (2016) stated that trust happens when the trustee has invited trust. Researchers are expected to observe integrity and treat participants with dignity and respect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). It is crucial to incorporate sound ethical decisions in your participant selection process to ensure the integrity of the research (Grant, Wolf, & Nebeker, 2019). I engaged the participants throughout the process to establish and develop a working relationship with each participant.

Finally, I ensured that the information provided aligns with the overarching research question. Wallace and Sheldon (2015) assert that researchers should take care to appropriately select research participants that closely align with the purpose of their research, not just from a scholarly standpoint, but also from an ethical standpoint. They found that some researchers compromised their studies by choosing participants haphazardly. Darmayanti, Simatupang, and Rudito (2018) and Cargill (2018) argue that while it could be more time consuming on the front end of the research, taking the time to select the appropriate participants will be more beneficial to the data collection process in the long run. I verified that each participant meets the criteria of the study to ensure that they align with the purpose of the study. The criteria being that they have been in business for at least two years and have a demonstrated record of retaining employees beyond two years.

Research Method and Design

The qualitative research method can be used to explore non-numerical data from a broader perspective without isolating the subject of the research (Sargeant, 2012). Using the qualitative research method, the researcher can find depth by following the subject matter wherever it leads (Austin & Sutton, 2014). The qualitative research method is used to understand the phenomenon by observations and experiences (Al-Busaidi, 2008). The different types of ways that the data can be collected in qualitative research serve to add perspective to the body of knowledge (Sutton & Austin, 2015). There are multiple designs researchers can use, including ethnographic, phenomenological, and case study designs (Yin, 2018). While all three are valid research designs, they all did not fit the parameters necessary for this study. This section will explore the various research methods and designs and the rationale for the method and design selected for this study.

Research Method

Qualitative research can be used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and the motivation of individual participants (Yin, 2018). The qualitative research method provides a more in-depth understanding of the research topic and the associated social phenomenon (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015; Hammersley, 2017). Researchers can better understand and interpret the subject matter and address areas of contention within the scholarly community (Barnham, 2015).

In a qualitative design, the researcher is serving as the primary research instrument (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Because of this, they can examine the research through a more personable approach (Yin, 2018). This approach affords the researcher the ability to gain critical insights they would not be able to gain through a more rigid approach such as that found in a quantitative design (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher can draw on parallels and similarities through observed experiences (Barnham, 2015). Drawing parallels allows researchers to organize the data they have collected by theme and connect them through all the sources of data (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Researchers use a qualitative research method to construct patterns, categories, and themes from the ground up without compromising the integrity of the data (Palinkas et al., 2015). Researchers elaborate that data can then be viewed from a deductive or an inductive perspective so the researcher can then determine if they need to collect additional evidence or if they need secure additional information to support their claims (McAbee, Landis, & Burke, 2017; Mihas, 2019). Qualitative research is continuously evolving which allows the researcher to learn as much as possible about the problem or issue being researched and the underlying themes or theories before developing any conclusions (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Researchers using the qualitative method attempt to develop a map of the problem. In doing so, the researcher reports from multiple perspectives. Approaching the research topic from multiple perspectives allows the researcher to identify all the factors that create a full picture of the subject and in turn mold an even larger final product (Fredricks et al., 2016). Consequently, I selected the qualitative method so that I could collect data to potentially obtain a rich understanding of the subject matter by understanding the experiences and methods of the participants.

The other two methods available for researchers are quantitative and mixed-method. In the quantitative method, the researcher is attempting to quantify, classify and examine data through statistical procedures of analysis (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014; Yin, 2018). The primary focus of the quantitative research method is to explain a phenomenon by collecting data and extrapolating it using statistical analysis (Yin, 2018). Since this study did not focus on numerical data or the statistical nature of numerical data, the quantitative method is not appropriate for my study. The mixed-method is a research method that combines elements of both the quantitative and qualitative methods (Yin, 2018). The quantitative aspect of the mixed method relies on a statistical and or mathematical analysis (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Since my study did not require the collection or analysis of statistical or quantitative data, the mixed method was not appropriate.

Research Design

Qualitative research designs that I considered included include ethnographic studies, phenomenological studies, and case studies. An ethnographic study is primarily used in anthropological research in which the researcher is studying varied group behavior over sometimes an extended period (Norreklit, Malina, & Selto, 2011). Ethnographies tend to focus on human society and cultures and requires the researcher to spend time inundated and in residence with the individuals being studied in order to get the most accurate picture of the research participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In an ethnographic study, the researcher takes on the role of the participant-observer and serves as the primary data collection tool. The ethnographic design is used to gain an in-depth understanding of customs and behaviors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since this design is best suited for cultural studies and not business studies, this design was not suitable.

Phenomenology is both a school of philosophy as well as a type of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers conducting a phenomenological study are interested in conscious experiences and a holistic picture of the essence of meaning as part of their research (Husserl, 1970). They study the phenomenon and the conscious experience of a person and life they lived in the context of their everyday life as well as their social and interpersonal interactions (Walsh et al., 2015). Since the intent of this study was not to explore a holistic picture of the essence of meaning in the participants, this design is not appropriate.

As with other types of qualitative research and inquiry, case studies are also used in the search for meaning and understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As with the other forms of qualitative inquiry, in a case study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Case studies are typically an inductive investigative strategy with the final product being a descriptive narrative (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Case studies have been used in many fields, including anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A case study is an in-depth empirical inquiry and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Walsh et al., 2015).

Case studies are appropriate when the researcher cannot separate the variables away from their context in a given phenomenon without compromising their integrity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There are key characteristics that are only found in case studies which define their uniqueness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Case studies tend to be contemporary and studied in their natural context through multiple methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). If a researcher is examining multiple cases, this is called a comparative case study or a multi-case study. Multiple case studies allow the researcher to strengthen the precision, validity, and stability of the findings. Multiple case studies also improve and enhance the external validity or generalizability of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Case studies are used more to collect data correlating with real-world workplace problems (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). While there has been a desire for case studies to develop new theory from researchers such as Yin (2018), the primary purpose of case study research is to build on existing theory (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Consequently, I selected a multi-case study because this study intended to use the data collected from the interview questions to obtain a better understanding of the strategies that foodservice owners can implement in order to arrest voluntary employee turnover. In a single case study, a researcher is only looking at one case or one example which would not always produce sufficient information to base any conclusions depending on the type of researcher being conducted (Yin, 2018).

Population and Sampling

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies that foodservice business owners implement to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The population sample consisted of five small business owners of foodservice businesses located in Central Ohio who have demonstrated successful experience in retaining employees beyond two years. This experience is defined as having maintained a staff with little to no turnover for a two-year period.

To ensure generalizability within the results of the data, Sargeant (2012) recommended using a standardized procedure for selecting participants. Sargeant contends this will also alleviate the possibility of influencing external variables. He also recommends using a purposeful approach when selecting research participants for qualitative research as it provides a breadth of variation in the data collection process.

Purposeful sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling wherein the researcher selects participants who meet specific criteria that align with the research question and who will help in the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015).

Purposeful sampling is a unique form of nonprobability sampling in that the participants are not chosen at random or due to convenience or availability (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016; Gentles et al., 2015). They are chosen specifically because the researcher has determined that their inclusion in the study will generate rich data and inform on the central research question (Gentles et al., 2015). Etikan et al. (2016) identified five significant steps in selecting a purposeful sample: defining the target population, identifying the inclusion/exclusion criteria, creating a plan to recruit population elements, determining the sample size, and selecting the targeted number of population elements. The participants for this study were selected purposefully based on the criteria that they are from organizations that have been in business for at least two years, they are small business owners, and they have implemented successful strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Selecting the appropriate population is necessary to ensure data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I plan to reach data saturation through data triangulation. Fusch and Ness (2015) argued that data triangulation is a means of supporting data saturation. Thomas (2017) posits that interviewing can be a data collection method that can ensure data saturation. Rosenthal (2016) recommends that data saturation can be best achieved through data source triangulation. Data source triangulation is in part obtaining data through multiple sources (Archibald, 2016; Harvey, 2015). These multiple parts were compared in analysis to support meeting data triangulation. I also be reviewed company employee records that support their employee retention. Data saturation was supported through the triangulation of data from interviews and reviewing company documents and records.

Ethical Research

Ethical considerations must be taken at every step in the qualitative research process in order to protect the participants first and foremost but to also protect the integrity of the researcher and the overall study (Roberts, 2015). As suggested by Roberts (2015), it is only appropriate for research to begin after obtaining Institution Review Board approval from the accompanying institution. Per these recommendations, I sought IRB approval from Walden University before contacting the research participants. The IRB approval number for this research is is 01-15-20-0673166.

Informed consent is not only an ethical requirement for research that involves human participants, but it is also the legal process of obtaining permission from the participants (Nijhawan et al., 2013). The informed consent form that all participants signed before participating in the research explained the background of the study, the participants' involvment, and what was asked of them. In addition, it explained the voluntary nature of the study and how participants could choose to opt-out of the study, the risks, and benefits of participating in the study, and how I as the researcher ensured the protection of their confidentiality (see Wallace & Sheldon, 2015).

This study was voluntary, and the participants had the right to withdraw from the study without cause. To exit or withdraw from the study, participants only needed to contact me (the researcher) by phone or email and declare their intentions to withdraw from the study. Participants understood through the informed consent document that their participation is solely voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Nijhawan et al., 2013).

Gelinas et al. (2018) asserted that participatory incentives could sometimes be viewed as coercion. He further explained that these incentives could have undue influence over the research participants. Based on these recommendations, there was not any monetary or tangible incentives for participating in this study. This is made clear in the informed consent form.

To ensure the ethical protection of the research participants, I adhered to the three ethical principles, as indicated in the Belmont Report and which include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Per the IRB, all research materials and all related data collected, including interview transcripts, will be preserved and stored securely for a period no less than five years.

Qualitative data cannot be collected anonymously, but researchers must collect and analyze data in a way that does not compromise the identity of the respondents (Leyva-Moral & Feijoo-Cid, 2017). Using the recommendations of Tourangeau (2018), the participants are identified as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, Respondent 4, and Respondent 5 to protect and preserve the participants confidentially. Doing so ensures two things; that the data collected are not compromised and that the meaning of the data will not be destroyed (Leyva-Moral & Feijoo-Cid, 2017; Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). The data will be stored on a secure flash drive for a minimum of 5 years after which time the drive will be formatted and then physically destroyed.

Data Collection Instruments

Cyr (2016) argued that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. As the primary data collection instrument, it is the researcher's responsibility to collect, synthesize, and analyze the data that is collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Cyr (2016) posited that the researcher, as the primary data collection instrument, is also responsible for interpreting and translating the data collected from the research participants into meaningful and useful information. As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument.

Semistructured interviews are a critical part of the qualitative research process as they are designed to generate responses from the participants that are subjective about the phenomenon being studied (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). In a semistructured interview, the researcher uses a series of questions to help understand complex relationships, obtain precise information, and summary information (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Van de Wiel (2017) states that a well-developed interview protocol can generate reproducible results under most circumstances. Interview protocols become a procedural guide that helps researchers develop robust interviewing techniques that produce rich and generous data (A. Adams, Betz, & Dringenberg, 2018; Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, & Hamzah, 2018). Yeong et al. (2018) argued that the interview protocol could serve as the most useful data collection instrument to the researcher as the protocol can not only strengthen the data collected, but it can also strengthen the reliability and validity of the research. I used an interview protocol as part of this study to guide the interview question and ensure that the interview as a whole conformed to the overarching research question and supports validity.

Fisher and Schreiber (2017) argued that member checking is a process by which a researcher asks their participants to verify the accuracy and if necessary, approve the aspects of the researcher's interpretation of the data they provided. This process involves going back and forth until the researcher and the participant are satisfied with the accuracy of the account (Candela, 2019). Candela (2019) described member checking as reviewing the case study draft with the participants to corroborate the findings, which can sometimes produce new evidence that was previously left out by the participant. The overall idea of member checking is to ensure the reliability and validity of the collection instrument (Candela, 2019). I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument. Member checking will be done by offering short summaries (no more than two pages) of interpretations of interview responses to the participants to verify that the data collected are an accurate reflection of their interview and the ideas they intended to convey. During this process, I made changes, when necessary, to my notes to ensure the accuracy of what the interviewer meant (see Appendix A).

Data Collection Technique

O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, and Sinha (2016) explained that the semistructured interview is the most widely used mode of collecting data in qualitative research. According to Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2015), semistructured interviews offer the flexibility of acquiring information in a conversational communication where the researchers can utilize the openness of the participants. Cridland, Jones, Caputi, and Magee (2015) argued that semistructured interviews are compelling in that not only is the researcher able to capture data, but they can capture a picture of the experiences of the participants. Qualitative researchers have long aspired to go beyond descriptors and explore a phenomenon from an in-depth perspective (Bryman, 2017). As such, I employed the semistructured interview as the data collection instrument for this study.

Each data collection technique has its advantages and disadvantages. In qualitative research, a researcher conducting a semistructured interview can gain meaningful information from the participant's tone, intonation, and body language (Bryman, 2017). The researcher may not always be bound by time constraints, which would allow them to be more interactive during the interview (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to gather rich and copious amounts of data, but the researcher is also at the mercy of the participant (Kallio et al., 2016). The researcher is working off data that is current to the participant and should their circumstances change, so could their response to any given interview question (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). Another disadvantage of semistructured interviews is the emotional component of the content of the research. Depending on how the participants connect with the data can determine much about their responses (Newcomer et al., 2015). Cridland et al. (2015) highlighted that one of the advantages of semistructured interviews is that new insights can be gained from the participants.

The interview process consisted of eight questions, followed by follow-up questions based on their responses. The interviews concluded by answering any questions the participants had. After each interview, I transcribed the entire event and provided short summaries (no more than two pages) of the interpretations of the interview responses to the participant for member checking. Member checking is a critical phase of the interview to ensuring the reliability and validity of the data (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Transcription is the process of transferring the spoken words of an interview participant in written words (Thomas, 2017). During the transcription process, Thomas (2017) argued that it is crucial to transform the uninterrupted message into a static form. Member checking involves having the research participants verify that the accounts contained in the interview transcripts accurately reflect their interview experiences (Thomas, 2017). After following up with the particpants and member checking interviews, I made corrections to the record to accurately reflect each of their intent.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers should make a practice of organizing data cleanly and efficiently (Malsch & Salterio, 2015). Researchers conducting qualitative research tend to produce copious amounts of data, and as such, researchers should take care to organize these data in order to assess how to prioritize these data best, so they are not inundated with unnecessary information (Feldman & Lowe, 2015). According to Feldman and Lowe (2015), these data must be organized and stored securely in a database. In addition to organizing and storing the raw data, researchers must also organize the data into categories or themes that represent the meaning and similarities of the data (Lancaster, 2017; Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). Mihas (2019) also pointed out that having data accessible for analysis was paramount to the organization process. For this study, all the interviews were captured electronically on a digital recording device. The interviews were transcribed and organized using a Microsoft Excel Workbook. Each participant was given a respondent number. The respondent number was used in place of any personally-identifying information to maintain participant confidentiality. The tabs are labeled per the respondent number. In the same workbook, a tab was created to organize the content of the transcriptions based on major themes that were revealed throughout the interview process. All raw data, including digital recording, interview transcripts, and notes, will be kept on a flash drive in a fireproof safe located in my office for 5 years. After that time, the flash drive will be reformatted using the MacBook Pro's native Disk Utility software. Once the drive is formatted, it will be physically destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research becomes especially important when the researcher is attempting to preserve the integrity of the research (Friese, 2019). Preserving this integrity is a process that involves removing all biases, implicit or otherwise, eliminating transcript bias, all while saturating the research (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015).

Triangulation. To bolster the validity of research, researchers must aim to confirm and support their data through multiple methods (Flick, 2018; Pettersson, Lachner, Frison, Riener, & Butz, 2018). The researcher must be poised to examine the research through multiple lenses, all while coming to the same or similar conclusions each time (Feldman & Lowe, 2015; Galman, 2016; Graue, 2015). In a qualitative case study, this is made possible through methodological triangulation (Archibald, 2016; Lawlor, Tilling, & Davey Smith, 2016). Park, Chun, and Lee (2016) argued that methodological triangulation is the process of confirming findings that will increase validity and reduce the weakness of a particular data collection method. Freeman (2016) posited the same construct in saying that researchers use methodological triangulation to improve validity by combining various methods in a single study. For this study, I used notes from personal observations as well as company documents to verify further the data collected.

Analysis. Yin (2018) prescribed a method for analyzing data in five phases (a) compiling and organizing the data into a formal database, (b) disassembling the database which can involve coding, (c) reassembling and arraying the data into groups or themes that emerge, (d) interpreting the data that is insightful and useful, and (e) concluding by taking action. This was the sequence of data analysis that was used for this study. Chowdhury (2015 and Stuckey (2015) supports Yin's (2018) assertations concluding that looking for themes in the data analysis process is arguably the most common approach for data analysis in qualitative research wherein the researcher uses interviews because the researcher develops empirical data about the social world. Bandara, Furtmueller, Gorbacheva, Miskon, and Beekhuyzen (2015) and Johnston (2017) found that emphasizing the rigor of analysis is critical in finding validity and reliability in the study which agrees with Yin.

To be completely cognizant of the data being collected, researchers must be able to determine when patterns in data emerge and can categorize accurately or code the data (Ganapathy, 2016; Graneheim, Lindgren, & Lundman, 2017). During the analysis process, researchers capture patterns, relationships, meanings, and often repeat this process with all their relevant data (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). There is a growing trend in using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) tools to code and analyze data in qualitative research (Ganapathy, 2016; Yin, 2018). I used the program Dedoose to perform coding and analysis for this study.

Method. Researchers have found that large amounts of data can be cumbersome to work with and that it is vital to develop a system for tracking data and organizing it in a way that is both useful and meaningful to the researcher (Woods, Macklin, & Lewis, 2016). Chowdhury (2015) argued that Excel is an excellent tool that can be used for managing a large amount of data, coding, sorting, and organizing data into themes. Ose (2016) agrees with Chowdhury (2015), arguing that Excel has been shown to useful for qualitative data analysis using conditional formatting along with other functions. Following these recommendations, I chose to use Excel to manage and organize the data I have collected. To analyze the data, I used Dedoose. This software allowed me to gain an understanding through visual representations of data via charts, tables, and visual representations of codes, patterns, and themes.

Once the data was organized, I used Dedoose to separate the information by coding the data. Coding involves separating the transcripts into segments and labeling the segments to summarize and categorize the information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). These segments can then be used to view themes that emerge throughout the research phase (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Ose, 2016).

Themes. As themes emerge from the data, those themes will be grouped and mapped directly to the elements of the transformational leadership theory or any other theories that might apply. The key themes were also be linked and compared to the professional and academic literature as well as newly published studies that were published after the completion of the proposal. After presenting these themes in alignment with the five-phase cycle designed by Yin (2018), I examined how these findings correlated to or varied from the findings from the previous literature as well as the conceptual framework. I distributed these findings with each of the participants as well as the Columbus Chamber of Commerce as well as chambers of commerce for surrounding cities in central Ohio.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers must be prepared to defend the fidelity of their work, and this is often done by assessing the rigor that was employed throughout the data collection process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Ose, 2016). To do this, researchers must design their studies to show reliability or the dependability of the study and validity or the credibility of their study (Leung, 2015; Lub, 2015).

Dependability. Member checking, also known as respondent validation, is the process of verifying that the data collected is true and accurate (Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). Member checking can be used to ensure dependability in qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) assert that member checking is a means of ensuring the fidelity of the data and the analysis of that data. To address dependability and credibility in this study, I performed member checking after the data from the interviews has been analyzed. Birt et al. (2016) and other researchers argued for the ethical implications of member checking asserting that ethical considerations should be taken to ensure participants are protected throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Harvey, 2015; Simpson & Quigley, 2016; Thomas, 2017). This is different from a transcript review where you ensure that you have accurately transcribed an interview from an in-person interview (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Credibility. Credibility in qualitative research refers to the trustworthiness of the study (Feldman & Lowe, 2015; Sarma, 2015). Credibility is also obtained through data triangulation (Sarma, 2015). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) argue that data saturation is about more than creating replicable results, but it also develops concordance within the data at a conceptual level. Harvey (2015) and Thomas (2017) argued that obtaining detailed, thick descriptions helps to convey credibility and transferability.

Confirmability. Getting rich data using interviews requires the interviewer to ask probative questions that elicit additional feedback and depth (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Rosenthal, 2016). In addition, adequate engagement throughout the data collection process can help to ensure the credibility of the study (Leung, 2015). The researcher must also be able to ensure that the study is designed expertly to measure the intended outcomes (Rosenthal, 2016). Ensuring that the study is designed expertly will be accomplished through ensuring the interview protocol aligns with the research question and interview questions. (Caretta, 2016) argued that researchers can employ specific strategies to ensure trustworthiness in the findings which include accounting for personal biases which may influence the findings, acknowledge biases in the sampling, maintaining meticulous recordkeeping practices, and including detailed and thick verbatim descriptions of the accounts of the participants that support the findings.

Data saturation. Data saturation is described as the point at which no new information emerges, and no new codes can be developed from the data collection efforts (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, & Lim, 2018). To address credibility and data saturation, I used methodological triangulation by interviewing multiple respondents and reviewing notes and accompanying company documents, I asked probative questions during the interviews, and finally, I remained actively engaged with the participants throughout the data collection process.

Transferability. Transferability is defined as being part of the criteria to ensure trustworthiness and rigor in a qualitative inquiry (Majid et al., 2018). Transferability also refers to the application of the findings in other settings and situations (Morse, 2015). Transferability can also be described as external validity, which involves an evaluation of the extent to which the results may be assumed valid for other cases (Connelly, 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016). To address transferability, I adhered to the data collection and analysis procedures outlined in this document, I adhered to interview protocol established for this study, and I ensured that data saturation is reached as indicated above. I addressed transferability by providing a vibrant depiction of the foundation and setting of this study, the sample, participants, and the method and design of this study.

Summary and Transition

In Section 2, after restating the purpose of the study, I addressed my responsibilities in my role as the researcher and the participants in the study. Additionally, I included a discussion on the research method, design, and the population and sampling technique chosen to conduct this study. Finally, this section includes a discussion on the ethical implications of the study, the data collection instruments, how the data was collected and analyzed, and how I achieved reliability and validity. Section 3 of this study includes an introduction, the presentation of the findings, a discussion on the application to professional practice, the implications for social change, recommendations for action, further research, reflections, and a conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that foodservice business owners used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The data came from interviews with owners of small foodservice businesses in Central Ohio. The findings included strategies that business owners used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. These strategies were found in conjunction with the four themes that were derived from the data. These themes include: (a) showing consideration, (b) knowledge sharing, (c) effective leadership through leadership development, and (d) building strong teams with family dynamics.

In Section 3, I present the findings along with an analysis of those findings with how they relate to the conceptual framework and the content from the literature review and how these findings apply to professional practice.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was: What strategies do foodservice business owners use to reduce voluntary employee turnover? The conceptual framework for this study was Bass's (1985) transformational leadership theory, which provided a foundation and framework of leadership traits that can be employed by leaders in different capacities and applied across multiple contexts including: training, direct managing practices, interviews, and staff debriefings. To address the research question, I purposefully selected five business owners of small foodservice businesses to be interviewed. All had been in business for at least 2 years and had demonstrated experience in developing and implementing effective strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover.

Emerging Themes

After coding and analyzing the data, I identified the following four major themes: (a) showing consideration, (b) knowledge sharing, (c) effective leadership through leadership development, and (d) building strong teams with family dynamics. In the following section, I assess these themes and how they relate to the conceptual framework that supported this study.

Theme 1: Consideration

According to the respondents, in order for their small businesses to be successful, they had to place a certain amount of reliance on their workforce. The respondents discussed their everyday business practices, such as scheduling employees based on their availability, providing paid time off , ensuring flexibility with their outside activities, being conscious of their family obligations, and work-life balance. These actions suggested that the respondents were considerate of their employees' life outside of work. As such, they aligned with the first construct of Bass's (1985) theory: that transformational leaders provide individual consideration to their followers in order to promote the follower's growth and development. All five respondents discussed how these practices contributed to their ability to retain to employees. The respondents also discussed how these practices contributed to their ability to build strong and reliable teams that perform better and thus increases productivity. As part of transformational leadership theory, individual consideration represents the leader's purposeful coaching and professional development of followers (Loughlin et al., 2016). Individual consideration is also a form of contingent reinforcement, whereby a leader constructively builds a follower using past failures and successes (Avolio & Bass, 1995). To be successful at it, leaders must understand the nature of their followers—they must get to know them personally and invite them on a journey of targeted coaching and mentoring (Avolio, 2004; Avolio & Bass, 1995).

The findings suggested that consideration was a top priority for all the respondents. All respondents indicated that individual consideration is at the forefront of their managerial processes. Some of the respondents provided internal company documents such as employee surveys, training materials, sample schedules, policies, and documented procedures to support their claims, and I assessed these materials together with the content of their interviews. I found support between the literature as well as other published studies, which I will discuss in detail below.

The results of the study showed that consideration ranks high on the list of strategies used to reduce voluntary employee turnover with R1, saying that as a manager, they must "consider them personally," meaning they take the whole person with the job. R1 continued to clarify this point, indicating that just because an employee works for you, they have an entire life that is just as important, if not more important than their job. This includes ensuring that the employees' needs are being met. R2 discussed how they spend more time creating the weekly schedule because they are aware that their employees have outside commitments, and they want to be considerate of those other obligations.

Over the course of the interviews, it became evident that the participants placed significant focus in considering their employees' personal needs, work-life balance, and professional aspirations. R2 discussed an instance where when one employee suffered a tragic loss, they allowed the employee to take an extended leave so that they could tend to personal matters. R2 believes this promotes loyalty amongst their employees as well as in other small foodservice businesses. A review of previous work schedules and lists of time off requests suggested that R1, R2, and R3 engaged in practices consistent with the interview whereby their scheduling is primarily focused on considering when employees need time off in order to attend to personal matters. R3 discussed how being flexible with employees makes it so they do not have to leave when they otherwise would not have a choice. Each of the respondents indicated that showing consideration to their employees, when they do not have to, has created an atmosphere in which their employees want to stay with them. R3 went on to say that they hear often that employees praise and credit them as a manager and their managerial style as the reason why they have stayed with their employer for as long as they have. It was evident that R4 also put forth substantial amounts of consideration in their managing style. It is their mission to get to know all their employees, not just as workers, but as individuals. R4's employees each have something unique to offer, and they want to capitalize on that. R5 discussed how they use consideration to motivate their employees. They used individual consideration by creating policies that address the needs of the person as well as the employee. Such initiatives include paid time off, employee assistance programs, higher wages, transparency, and creating and fostering a caring environment and culture.

A review of the paid time off bank which showed the account that is used to fund PTO is not heavily accessed by the employees. What this supported, and what R5 suggested, was that employees would rather be at work as opposed to using the paid leave time to which they are entitled. R5 attested that this suggested their employees are loyal and put work first because they know when the time comes, the company will put them first.

The broader constructs of the transformational leadership theory relate to how individual consideration plays a vital role in business practice (Buil et al., 2018). The overall effect of consideration is that it builds onto and creates transforming behaviors wherein the follower assumes the vision of the leader and carries it out willingly (Buil et al., 2018). Individual consideration is also responsible for cultivating and influencing creativity in the workplace (Dunne et al., 2016). Finally, consideration plays a vital role in inspiring followers, both personally and professionally (Barbînta et al., 2017). By inspiring their followers, leaders are able to build trust within their workforce and create positive working environments that promote growth and development (Jena et al., 2018). Consequently, the findings suggested the respondent's behaviors aligned with the transformational leader construct to support employee retention.

This indicates that employees respond well to managers who are considerate of their personal lives as well as their personal and professional goals. These results suggested that managers who take the time to build a relationship with their employees and encourage them to pursue those goals are less likely to see voluntary employee turnover in their businesses. These findings supported and suggested that consideration is integral to both the body of knowledge and the transformational leadership theory. These findings also corroborated the findings of a 2019 published study in which a researcher found that individual consideration was a leading factor in job embeddedness which is defined as the collection of factors that contribute to employee retention (Maqsood, Tufail, Sardar, & Gill, 2019). This aligns with the construct of individual consideration found in Bass's (1985) theory that leaders should treat employees as individuals. Taking this into account helps leaders promote the individual talents of their employees.

Bass (1985) suggested that each follower has individual needs that must be met and that the leader is responsible for meeting those needs. This is significant in that the findings of this study correlated with other studies as well as the literature to suggest that managers who take individual consideration into practice are less likely to see voluntary employee turnover in their businesses. The respondents in this study demonstrated consideration towards their employees in a variety a ways, but when the overall cause and effect is examined, we see managers that appeal to their employees' individuality and making a conscious effort to consider the whole person as opposed to merely the employee. The respondents were considerate of, among other things, personal schedules, personal and professional growth and development, compensation, personal needs, and organizational culture.

Theme 2: Knowledge Sharing

Another core tenet of transformational leadership theory is intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1985). Knowledge sharing refers to the social behavior of promoting and motivating the continual practice of knowledge creation (Rawung et al., 2015). The behaviors of all five respondents aligned with the transformational leader construct to support employee retention. All five respondents revealed that it is their goal to create an environment that is conducive to learning in all aspects and that they are constantly challenging their employees to step outside of their comfort zones to build them up and expose their potential. All five respondents were adamant that communication is paramount and that by keeping strong communication between them and their staff they are constantly able to make corrections to processes with minimal damage to morale. Researchers have examined how communication and knowledge sharing in relation to the construct of intellectual stimulation affects the workplace and have found that it builds trust, openness, and supportive attitudes (Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2019).

According to TLT, knowledge sharing is a continual practice whereby leaders continue to share knowledge, and followers do likewise (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). Knowledge sharing is often described as a two-dimensional practice that, when implemented, can have an ameliorating effect on the work environment (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016; Paulin & Suneson, 2015; Ritala et al., 2015). Knowledge sharing is a form of intellectual stimulation in which a leader challenges the status quo of the followers' nature in an effort to continue to build leaders (Paulin & Suneson, 2015; Ritala et al., 2015). R2 discussed how it is important to place employees in situations where they can excel but to do that, you must provide them with the tools to be successful. Bass’s (1985) theory placed significant importance on a leader’s ability to stimulate their followers intellectually.

These findings suggested that leaders who make it a priority to share information with their followers, whether it be training materials or company financial data, can build trust within the workspace. The result of this trust can create a working environment where employees feel as though they are directly responsible for the success or failure of the company. The respondents, when asked to follow up in more detail, expressed that their success was based on the success of their employees and so sharing knowledge was an integral component to the overall success of the business. Cekmecelioglu and Ozbag (2016) made it clear that sharing knowledge promotes higher levels of productivity.

All the respondents discussed at length that knowledge sharing is a powerful tool that propels their respective companies forward. They all also indicated that as managers, there is always room for improvement and growth and that they use what they learn from their employees to make themselves better managers and, in turn, help their employees to be better at their jobs. When discussing the implications of knowledge sharing, R1 discussed how some of their employees helped them understand different aspects of the business. Transformational leaders who engage in knowledge sharing with their followers have an ameliorating effect on the overall workplace (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). The findings indicated when managers shared information about the business, employees felt valued. R4 discussed how they inform the employees about the sales figures from previous segments and then challenge them to beat those numbers in the following segments. R4 indicated that this tactic produced a strong work ethic, and they saw increased productivity. This indicated that keeping the employees well-informed of the company’s financial standing challenged them to become more productive which gives employees something to work towards. R5 discussed something similar; they indicated how they also share financial information with their teams so that they too can have something to work towards in the long run. Thus, by creating value through knowledge sharing, managers have the potential to reduce voluntary employee turnover significantly. This is supported by the findings in this study, wherein the respondents discussed how they used knowledge sharing as a strategy to mitigate voluntary employee turnover.

Throughout the data collection process, it became evident that knowledge sharing was a significant theme in reducing voluntary employee turnover with each respondent. R2 indicated that their business is set apart because they put a significant focus on training their employees. R2 also indicated that by emphasizing their training program, they can ensure that their employees are equipped to do the work that they have been tasked to do. They also believe that by having this training and a broad understanding of their job, employees are less likely to leave. Respondents were asked to provide documents such as training materials, employee evaluations, and retention records as part of the data collection process. A review of training manuals, documented policies and procedures, and company retention records by R2 supported that their ability to share knowledge provokes an atmosphere where employees can grow. The documents, in addition to the interview, suggested a correlation between knowledge sharing, transformational leadership, and employee retention.

R1 discussed that training works both ways, stating they, as a manager, learn from their employees as much as their employees learn from them. R1 postulates that this symbiosis creates a strong relationship and loyalty that precludes the employee from leaving their job. R3 shared being involved in the entire process has the effect of creating an atmosphere where information flows from the top down in a free-flowing manner. R3 indicated that, in terms of being a manager, “you learn from others what not to do.” In terms of helping to reduce voluntary employee turnover, R4 employs multiple strategies, one of those strategies is to get to know their employees on a profoundly personal level. R4 indicated that it was essential to train employees properly and to connect with them and to make them feel comfortable. This connection allows for the free flowing of ideas between employees and the manager.

R5 discussed how they see knowledge sharing as a way to communicate with the staff on a different level. R5 indicated how they provide tools and resources for their employees to grow and that includes sharing relevant financial data about the company, training opportunities, and surveys to gauge how the employees feel about their job. R5 continued to discuss how working to improve in areas where they seem to be lacking and creating more opportunities for employees to reach their long-term goals helps to reduce voluntary employee turnover. While it seems counterintuitive, R5 indicated that this strategy helps to build loyalty among their workforce. A review of internal company documents which included employee surveys and limited financial data suggested that each employee is aware of the company’s financial health. R5 indicated that they provide this information to the employee as a way of helping them to realize how their contributions directly affect the financial outcomes of the business.

These findings also corroborated a study by Suhana, Udin, Suharnomo, and Mas’ud (2019) that examined and analyzed the mediating role of knowledge sharing in relation to TLT and innovative behavior. These findings disconfirmed the findings of a study by Coun, Peters, and Blomme (2019), which found no correlation between knowledge sharing and the transformational leadership theory. While it is possible the industry and organizational size could be a factor, these findings are significant, along with the examples from the literature and suggested that employees are less likely to leave their jobs if they are intellectually stimulated by their managers. The respondents in this study intellectually stimulated their employees in a variety of ways including through targeted coaching, training, utilizing previous work experience, newsletters, one-on-one meetings, and by making employees aware of the financial health of the organization. Using these strategies, the respondents were able to build trust, loyalty, and in turn reduce voluntary turnover in their respective businesses.

Leadership development relates to the construct of idealized influence because transformational leaders are strong role models and becoming a role model requires leaders to assess and reevaluate their leadership styles (Heimann, Ingold, & Kleinmann, 2019). Conducting a comprehensive analysis of this construct revealed that individualized influence promotes a positive workplace environment (Zdaniuk & Bobocel, 2015). Researchers have also found that this construct contributes to leader success, which, in turn, affects the success of the follower (Heimann et al., 2019). Some of the participants had between 2 and 5 years of experience as a manager, while others had well over 15 years of experience, but they all had something in common; they are all still learning to be managers.

Theme 3: Effective Leadership Through Leadership Development

Effective leaders who exhibit transformational leadership qualities have been known to develop strong relationships between themselves and their followers (Braun et al., 2013). The literature on transformational leadership suggested that effective leaders attempt to assess their skills to determine the best way to motivate, satisfy, and help their followers perform efficiently (Elgelal & Noermijati, 2015). Previous research in transformational leadership have also found that effective leaders have been known to improve the financial health of, and overall employee dispositions in, their respective organizations (Strukan et al., 2017).

The results of this study suggested that effective leadership, achieved through leadership development and previous leadership practices, contributes to reducing voluntary employee turnover. In reviewing surveys and employee evaluations, employees felt that their managers were highly effective. As stated previously, respondents were asked to provide internal documents to illustrate how this is achieved. Several respondents provided documents, which included employee surveys, responses to comment cards, as well as employee assessments that were analyzed together with the data that was collected from the interviews. The results are discussed in detail below.

This theme emerged from all five respondents. During each interview, every respondent made a meaningful contribution about how they learned to not only be a manager, but how they learned to manage. One of the core tenets of transformational leadership theory is idealized influence which suggest that a leader must be a purpose-driven role model (Bass, 1985). The respondents all took part in self-assessments to determine if their leadership style was serving to improve their relationships with their employees, or if they needed to improve on certain practices to better address the needs of their followers.

R1 discussed how they value what their team is able to bring to the table, because the team improves their managerial skills. R2 said "most of the job is learning how to handle different situations and that no one really teaches you how to do it—it's mostly trial and error." The respondents had not stumbled upon their positions as managers—they started from the ground up and created businesses and employed staff that, over the years, became loyal, and not to their detriment, but to their surprise. The employees were hard workers, loyal, and productive—of the highest caliber, according to the respondents. These managers realized that their capacity to motivate and challenge their employees was what motivated them. They were seeing the success they created in other people as part of their mission. R2 said "I had to learn along the way," while R1 said "We all just try to treat each other with respect and all the while work more efficient." A review of employee surveys and managerial assessments indicated that R2 takes the time to consider which business practices are working and which ones are not. By doing this, R2 is able to reassess the needs of the business with the employees' needs and manage better, which, based on the interview and the results of the surveys, has proven to be successful.

Conducting a comprehensive analysis into the understanding of the managerial process revealed a breadth of knowledge on how the respondents viewed themselves in the scope of practice of running a small foodservice business. Each respondent indicated they learned how to manage in a fashion that arrested voluntary employee turnover through trial and error. R3 discussed how you must lead by example and remember that your workforce is human. I found that it was this human aspect to managing that was a common theme among each respondent. Each of the respondents discussed how managing was not just about getting work accomplished through other people, but it was about leading by example, and holding their staff to a higher standard. R2 indicated that for them, managing meant overlooking certain things in order to focus on the bigger picture. R3 said “I've had to learn how to, again, find the strength in people and use their strength and not expect every single person to have those same strengths.”

The need for leadership development in the course of managing is helpful in that it allows managers to look at past failures and improve, and in the same respect, they are able to look at past successes and capitalize on those outcomes (Nazim, 2016). R4 indicated that their employees' cause for staying was in part due to them realizing how the role they played affected the business. R4 went on to address their overall perspective of what the employees mean to them and how that translates into the work and their personal lives saying, "I’d rather be remembered, when I die, how I impacted people's lives versus the dollar figures and how I made a difference and how I gave them strength.”

R5 discussed how they removed barriers from the managing process. R5 established policies and implemented programs to help connect managers and employees, but they created and fostered a culture that allowed employees to feel safe at work. R5 also created "open door" policies and made employees feel as though they mattered. R5 also addressed the gravity of being in management for upwards of 15 years and discussed how they learned over the years that building trust and establishing a strong vision was vital to the success of the business. R1 and R4 denoted that they are not sure if they would have made it as far as they had in this industry if they had not taken inventory of how far they had come.

A review of employee surveys indicated that R3 and R5 used surveys to determine how their employees view them as a manager and how they view their job. R3 and R5 used these surveys to make changes to their management styles in an effort to deliver results that will keep their employees engaged in the work. Consequently, the respondents stated that leadership development was a leading strategy in how they were able to successfully reduce voluntary employee turnover.

The findings of this study suggested that effective leadership bears some of the responsibility of reducing voluntary employee turnover, and one of the ways that managers can discover this for themselves is through leadership development. This study suggested that managers also need space to reflect on their job performance. Managers need to be able to look at what they have done and assess what has worked and what has not worked. Managers need to be able to course-correct if necessary, but above all, they need to be able to review their leadership style to see if they are creating a positive impact or harm to their businesses. Stevens (2011) asserted that in part, the objective of the four tenants of the transformational leadership theory was to help leaders elevate their followers to become capable, successful leaders themselves. The literature on transformational leadership pointed out that transformational leaders have a direct and ameliorating effect on their followers; in turn, those followers emanate those same qualities (T. Nguyen et al., 2017).

The results of this study also correlated with the results of Ullah, Khattak, Khan, and Sana (2019), which examined effective leadership styles. In this study, the researchers found that transformational leadership style proved to be more effective at retaining employees than other styles such as transactional leadership style and produced more effective leadership through the building of relationships. This is significant because this correlated with the findings of this study in that managers who place significant focus on leadership development, their managing style, and being an effective leader see less voluntary employee turnover. It is also significant in that it suggested that leaders must be purpose-driven and that they wield a type of influence over their employees that in practice helps to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The respondents accomplished this by using surveys aimed at increasing effectual behaviors, learning from past mistakes, and capitalizing on past successes.

Theme 4: Teamwork and the Family Dynamic

Teamwork, which is bolstered by trust between leader and follower, is a crucial component to the workplace dynamic where teams are necessary to perform the essential job duties (DiPietro & Bufquin, 2018; Jang & Kandampully, 2018). It should also be noted that teamwork is fostered by a carefully curated balance of motivation and stimulation on the part of the leader (Boies et al., 2015). Wang et al. (2017) extrapolated that transformational leaders who build and foster team morale see improved work environments. Transformational leaders also see an opportunity for growth in their teams as well as more developed mentoring relationships. The results of this study suggested that teamwork is one of the major driving forces behind the success of each business owner that was interviewed in this study.

The final theme that emerged from the data was teamwork and the comprehensive effect that it has on the workplace and the leader/follower relationship. The respondents credited teamwork and transforming that teamwork into a family dynamic as one of the factors that have made their businesses successful, and as a strategy they have used in reducing voluntary employee turnover. In a separate study, Bachkirov (2019) found that a family-like atmosphere inside an organization increased positivity, strong teams and increased productivity. The final tenet of TLT is inspirational motivation and leaders that create an atmosphere that promotes inspiration are far more likely to see change in their followers (Bass, 1985). Change in followers is revealed through motivation and inspiration (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Bass, 1985). This construct is relevant because researchers have found that strong teams are built when transformational leaders establish relationships and roles for the members of the team (Chou, Lin, Chang, & Chuang, 2013). The respondents were asked to provide internal documents which include employee evaluations, one-on-one meeting notes, as well as policies and documented procedures that would be analyzed in conjunction with the data collected from the interviews, the results of which are discussed in more detail below.

All the respondents mentioned teamwork during each of their responses to the interview questions. R1 indicated they know when they must push their employees to work harder but stated that it is always a “team effort.” R2 indicated that even during hard times or if problems with the equipment arise in the middle of a busy night, the entire staff band together to make sure they all have a productive shift. R3 said, “I make sure that we all stay together and close like a regular family.” Building functioning teams, the results proved was not easy, and like many of the other strategies the respondents employed required trial and error. R1 said, "we've had fights and other situations, but no one has ever quit." R3 emphasized that people are humans and that as a manager, that has to be understood.

A review of R3’s one-on-one meeting notes suggested that employees are asked to engage in one-on-one meetings regularly throughout their employment. These meetings are designed to help track the progress of the employee as well as to provide constructive feedback about job performance. R3 believes these meetings are critical at developing employees and helping to shape the whole team. The results suggested that building a team that works, while not impossible, is a herculean task, but it is necessary so that employees know that they are well cared for. R2 indicated that teams are important, because you must have teams that work well together. R4 talked about a situation in which they felt like they were in over their head, but when they brought the situation to the team, the training they had received came back in an instant when the team responded, "we can do this."

A team with strong family-like dynamics helps to create an atmosphere where employees feel safe, and when they feel safe, they can accomplish much more (Nurdan, 2003). Each respondent indicated that by engaging with their employees and creating a family-type structure and dynamic, it arrested voluntary employee turnover because, in some respect, you must work together through difficult times. To corroborate this, R1 said, “yeah, we fight, but we figure it out.” The findings also supported that disagreements between leaders and followers help grow the relationships and build strong teams, thus also reducing voluntary employee turnover. R1 said, "it doesn't just feel like a family; we *are* a family.” R2 said, “not everyone stays long enough to know that we actually care about them, but the ones that are here that long, know that we do care about them.” The responses from all the respondents indicated that they put a significant focus on creating this family dynamic within their respective businesses. The respondents indicated by establishing this type of environment, their employees feel that they are more than just employees, and this creates a trust on which they can capitalize.

R3 discussed how they purposefully cultivated a family dynamic to promote growth in the workplace. A review of flyers, staff calendars and email invitations suggested that employees that work for R3 are invited to participate in outings outside of work. These outings are designed to show the employees that they have value outside of work—as individuals. These outings are also designed to build a team rapport. Employees are also invited to celebrate major holidays together, which also bolsters the building of teams and family-like structures that were discussed in the interview. Adding to that, R4 said, "show your appreciation for your team and treat them like family instead of just another person you hired off the street," where the goal is to bring these employees together, create a strong, functioning team where everyone works together for the common good of the business. R5 discussed the importance of teamwork and communication in the workplace to build strong bonds. R5 also discussed that when you create and maintain a family dynamic, you inspire your workforce and employees tend to gravitate towards that connection. A review of company policies and documented procedures supported that employees that work for R5 are provided with team-oriented tools to develop them professionally to work on successful teams. Documented correspondeces also suggest that R5 cultivated a family dynamic by inviting employees to outings designed to get them away from the workplace to bond and build relationships.

The respondents indicated that by showing the employees that they hold value outside of merely showing up to a job, one creates a mutually beneficial relationship between the employee and the manager. The employee has a job where they feel secure, and the manager has a team that they can trust to carry out the mission and objectives they set forth. This ties into the transformational leadership theory in that leaders attempt to motivate their followers to transcend to a place beyond their self-interest—they buy into the leader's vision and carry out that vision zealously (Buil et al., 2018).

The findings of this study corroborated the findings of a study by Stedman and Adams-Pope (2019) which suggested a strong correlation between transformational leadership and teamwork, team building, and leading diverse teams using transformational leadership practices. These findings also corroborated a study by Zhang, Sun, Jiang, and Zhang (2019) whose research revealed that while working on teams, transformational leadership amplified the relationships between team members as well as the relationship between leader and follower.

The findings of these 2019 studies is significant as it correlated to the findings of this study in that managers who are intentional about creating strong teams see less voluntary employee turnover. This conclusion was drawn because all five respondents sought to create strong teams within their respective businesses. The respondents also implemented policies that were congruent with the literature on teams (see DiPietro & Bufquin, 2018; Jang & Kandampully, 2018; Tang et al., 2015). The respondents also created a strong family-like dynamic in their respective businesses by celebrating major holidays together, acknowledging employee accomplishments, promoting creativity, and by regularly bonding outside the confines of the workplace.

Application to Professional Practice

The primary objective of this study was to examine the different strategies owners of foodservice businesses used to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The findings of this study revealed current effective approaches for reducing voluntary employee turnover in the foodservice industry. The findings of this study may contribute to industry practices by providing examples of successful strategies that could help reduce voluntary employee turnover of qualified employees. Owners and managers of foodservice businesses can apply these findings, which will reduce the need to retrain employees, cut back on the costs associated with recruiting, and increase productivity. In the following sections I will introduce and discuss how these themes can be applied to business practices.

Consideration

Owners and managers of small foodservice businesses need to be cognizant of the needs of their employees; they should be considerate of their personal as well as their professional needs. (DiPietro, Martin, & Pratt, 2019). R4 indicated that at one point, they failed to assess the needs of one of their most reliable employee and when the employee left, it left a gap that could not be easily filled. R4 said, "where I dropped the ball was not pushing that employee to be better," and going on to say, “these people are my investment.” If employees are not being challenged or stimulated, they tend to be comfortable. R3 said, “you have to give them something to strive for.”

This would suggest that business owners and managers should incorporate practices that offer individual consideration to the employees as evidenced by R1, R2, and R3. These respondents make sure that scheduling aligns with the personal lives of their employees without creating conflicts or gaps in coverage in regard to the needs of the business. R2 also added that one of their competitors does not support individual consideration, and they have seen firsthand what can happen if they manage in such a manner. Owners and managers of small foodservice businesses can implement practices that consider the whole employee when creating a schedule. With respect to some of the practices employed by R5, owners and managers can implement an employee of the month system, provide paid time off and other benefits such as an employee assistance program.

R3 found that treating employees as individuals was successful at reducing voluntary employee turnover. R3 demonstrated consideration by giving their employees significant ownership of some of the day-to-day processes. Owners and managers can implement similar programs and initiatives. The significant findings here were that managers found that when they considered the whole employee, they in effect, created a loyal following of individuals who then considered what was necessary in order for the business to be successful and took on their roles with a greater sense of urgency.

Knowledge Sharing

Based on the interviews, employees work best when they know what they are doing and how to do it. The respondents in this study all indicated that training their employees and providing the tools necessary for them to succeed helped to create loyalty to the business. The free flowing of knowledge between manager and employee and vice versa served each of the respondents well. The respondents indicated the importance of sharing knowledge and growing together as a team had been paramount to successfully retaining their most qualified employees for as long as they have.

The data also suggested that when leaders share critical information about the company, it can generate a positive response from their employees. As with R3 and R5, who share sensitive financial data about the business with their employees, they have found that this not only boosts morale, but it also motivates the employees to perform more than they did in previous segments.

Business leaders should consider applying these types of practices in their workplaces. Some of the ways this can be accomplished were shared during the data collection phase of this study. Some of the respondents created manuals that detailed work duties, other created maps for specific processes, and established strong communication efforts between manager and employee. While there was no sure way to establish this, a few things were made clear: managers can try different strategies to find out which is the most effective way to share knowledge and keep employees in the loop.

The respondents found that when employees knew what was going on with the business, they performed better. R3 and R5 said that their workforce is stronger than it has ever been since they started sharing the financial data. That, combined with other strategies of leadership, created a loyalty amongst their most veteran workers that they (veteran employees) pass down to the newer class of employees.

Effective Leadership Through Leadership Development

Owners and managers can hone their managerial skills through leadership development. As a major theme of this study, the manager should ensure that they are continually recycling through their managerial skills to understand specific trends or dynamics. Each of the respondents in this study indicated that to improve in their day-to-day duties, they must be cognizant of their shortcomings and failures as managers. Managers must be diligent at finding different ways to improve their skills if they intend to be effective in their respective businesses.

The data suggested that effective leadership can be an essential trait in running a business while retaining qualified employees. All the respondents indicated that they developed their effective leadership skills over time and through trial and error, but the resulting skills have proven most useful. These skills include learning to treat employees as individuals, being considerate of their employees' abilities, and fostering relationships with each of them to promote growth on both a personal and professional level.

R5 conducted a survey to determine how employees felt about management and were surprised to learn that most of the employees felt valued in their jobs. The survey data indicated that employees had a strong posture towards their jobs and their intention to stay at their current job. Other managers can learn from this and implement similar assessments to gain insight into their management ability. R1 indicated that they came into the business with very little knowledge of how to manage, but they saw the importance of relationships and capitalized on that, and over time this allowed them to develop a strong sense of management.

The data suggested that all the respondents continue to take time to perform leadership development. This allows them to take stock in their current practices and either change or improve in certain areas to ensure they are as effective as they can be.

Teamwork and the Family Dynamic

For small foodservice businesses to remain competitive in the industry, owners and managers can institute and establish strong teams and nurture an environment of teamwork. Based on the interviews, owners and managers should take a genuine interest in the lives of their employees and promote an environment that resembles a family-like structure. This type of relationship arrests turnover intention and bolsters overall work performance (Purba et al., 2016).

The data, in this case, suggested that managers who marshal strong teams see less voluntary employee turnover. Building teams is easy, building reliable and effective teams is what matters, according to the interviews. R2 indicated that they like to staff their shifts with individuals who are strong in different areas so that the individuals working can balance each other out. R2 said, “not everyone is going to be strong in every area, and it's important to ensure you have people on your team who can complement one another.” When it comes to teams, R3 wanted to establish a strong team that can operate under pressure and with little direction. R3 credited their training and personal consideration to this effect.

Managers can use this and effectually build teams by fostering the personal and professional development of their employees. The data suggested that by investing time and resources in the development of their staff, these managers were able to command strong teams that produced strong results. Based on a review of financial documents of R3, this included increased profits and a review of employment history and retention documents from R2, R4, and R5 showed increased employee longevity and promotions into management.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Voluntary employee turnover has all-encompassing effects which impacts businesses, employers, stakeholders, communities, and individuals as well as the foodservice industry as a whole. The results of this study could potentially contribute to foodservice business owners supporting local social change. Also, the findings of this study may contribute to positive social change because reducing voluntary employee turnover has the potential of lowering unemployment, reducing economic instability, fostering strong economic growth within communities, and enhancing community relations.

Recommendations for Action

The foodservice industry continues to thrive, and with the constant changes to the industry, managers need to be cognizant of how they want to manage and how the way they manage affects their end product. Managers need to understand what strategies are effective at reducing voluntary employee turnover and how to implement these strategies. Managers need to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses within their workforce and formulate strategies for addressing the shortcomings and for capitalizing on the strengths. The participants have all used strategies that have been successful at reducing voluntary employee turnover. The four themes that emerged as a result of this study have been crafted into four actionable recommendations. For owners and managers of small foodservice businesses whose businesses are suffering from voluntary employee turnover, I recommend the following strategies which are based on the results of this study.

Recommendation 1: Exercise Consideration

Managers should be considerate of their employees' personal lives and personal schedules without compromising the work of the businesses. Employees who feel as though their managers care about their individual lives are less likely to leave their jobs. This could include being mindful of the scheduling practices and being sure to take into consideration that employees have lives outside of work. It could also include developing incentive structures for employees, developing programs to recognize the efforts and contributions that employees make to the workplace.

This all comes down to treating employees as individuals as opposed to just employees and making sure to invest in their growth, both personally and professionally. Developing employees into leaders could create loyalty and add value to the workplace. Managers could also ensure that they have programs in place to help with the personal needs of their employees, such as employee assistance programs as well as programs to support an employee’s endeavors such as paid time off. Making some or all these investments in employees could make all the difference in their retention or not.

Recommendation 2: Engage in Knowledge Sharing

Managers should also take time to educate and adequately train their employees. The results of this study indicated that employees feel valued when their manager takes the time to show them how a job should be done and provides the tools and resources to get that job done. The data also suggested that employees can be motivated when they understand the financial health of the business. Managers should consider sharing some of the financial data with their employees and challenge them to improve from previous periods. It is also essential that employees understand how their contributions affect the business. This can be seen as a motivating factor.

Managers should also consider using newsletters or some other medium to convey important information to their employees. Based on the data, creating and establishing strong communication with employees not only builds trust but creates an atmosphere of transparency, which also helps employees feel safe in the workplace.

Recommendation 3: Develop Leadership

Managers should take time to consider what they can improve on to be effective in the workplace. This can mean taking a self-inventory at what is working and what is not and making sure to improve upon the weak areas and capitalize on the stronger areas.

Managers have to learn what is working and what is not working and taking stock in self and practice helps to improve current practices in the workplace. To do this, it is recommended that managers regularly administer surveys to their employees. The survey should allow the employee to assess the manager's style and effectiveness. Based on the results of the survey, the manager should modify their managing style if necessary.

Managers can also implement an open door policy and establish a strong presence among their employees. Employees should feel safe to approach their manager with concerns or areas they feel could be improved. This can also be accomplished by using a suggestion box or hotline where employees can voice concerns. Employees should be able to direct their concerns to a place where they feel heard. Based on the data, employees were appreciative when they felt that their voices were heard.

Recommendation 4: Build Strong Teams

Finally, managers need to build strong teams and incorporate a family dynamic in the workplace. Employees feel engaged when their managers understand that they exist outside the workplace. This can be accomplished in several ways. Managers can promote healthy team environments by pairing employees based on their respective strengths and weaknesses. Managers should also staff shifts so that more senior staff can mentor new staff. Establishing mentoring relationships between coworkers and between managers and employees can also help to strengthen teams.

I would also recommend that managers take time to engage with their employees outside of work. Hosting workshops or training that is geared towards building teams can help create stronger teams inside the workplace. The data suggested that when employees feel that their value extends beyond the workplace, they are less likely to leave their jobs. To this end, managers should celebrate birthdays and special holidays with their employees to create a family dynamic.

Inside the workplace, it is recommended that managers foster personal relationships with their employees, as this also builds a strong community environment and family-like structure. Based on the data, building strong teams is critical to both the success of the individual and the business.

Disseminating the Results

The results of this study will be disseminated through conferences, scholarly journals, educational seminars, and local chambers of commerce. I will also release the findings of this study to each of the participants in the form of a one to two page summary of the results. This study will be published in the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database for future scholars and academic professionals.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies that small foodservice businesses can use to reduce voluntary employee turnover. The strategies taken from the participants represent a sample of strategies being employed by managers in this industry. Future scholars should consider expanding the sample size to discover other strategies that could be effective at reducing voluntary employee turnover as well as examining this study through other leadership theories and models.

The first limitation of this study was the participants' definition of success and how it could skew the study. This study used a two-year threshold to determine eligibility for participation in this study. Future scholars could reexamine and potentially extend the criteria used in this study and possibly develop additional strategies based on those results. This study was also limited in that it was conducted from the perspective of current managers. Future scholars can gain different insights by studying the perspective of past managers who also had success at reducing voluntary turnover.

Reflections

When I first began this journey, I wanted to save the world. I had some idea of what I wanted to study, but it was certainly not what this study is. After each course I took, the ideas slowly morphed from one to the next, and before I knew it, I was on a mission to stop voluntary employee turnover. I became fascinated with the idea of the foodservice industry and the inner workings of restaurants. Transformational leadership theory has also been very close to my heart, and I knew I wanted to complete a study using this conceptual framework. This journey posed significant barriers, but all the while, I knew the importance of this study and its contribution to academia. I challenged myself harder than I ever have before, and as I pushed and honed my focus, I slowly began to see the bigger picture.

I was blessed with an amazing committee who saw the potential in my work and who also challenged me to dig deeper and explore this topic from every available viewpoint. As I continued to explore the topic and develop the research question and interview questions, I was further challenged to understand the very nature of managers and their perceptions of leadership. The results of this study were somewhat surprising to me. During the interviews, I heard some of the things I expected to hear, and I also heard some things that I did not expect. The third theme of leadership development was quite surprising to me. The respondents all had some sort of "Aha!" moment— a realization or an epiphany that helped them to understand the type of manager they are and how they want to impact their employees. It was in these realizations that I realized what makes a great leader, and it is the fact that we are all human, and through trial and error, we as leaders seek to do better by the people in our charge. We seek to improve the lives of the people around us and by whatever percentage that is and by whatever standard that is—our hope and goal is that the people who we lead become better people because of us—and for that, I am proud to have done this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies for reducing voluntary employee turnover in the foodservice industry. As discussed in the existing body of literature and illustrated in the examples in the findings of this study, voluntary employee turnover is a problem wherein solutions already exist. The study findings show that reducing voluntary turnover is possible. If businesses in this industry want to continue to be competitive and perform effectively and profitably, then reducing voluntary employee turnover must be at the forefront of their business practices. Researchers have noted that replacing an employee can potentially cost small businesses up to 20% of the employee’s estimated annual compensation (Wasilowski, 2018).

The conceptual framework for this study provides a map of leader traits and strategies that are successful at reducing voluntary employee turnover. Transformational leadership theory, at its core, is about leaders influencing followers to take ownership of the leader's vision wherein the follower voluntarily carries out the mission of the leader (Antonakis & Day, 2018). Leaders must inspire the change that they want to or expect to see in their organizations. In order to reduce voluntary employee turnover, the participants in this study provided these strategies: (a) exercise consideration, (b) engage in knowledge sharing, (c) perform self-inventories to be an effective leader, and (d) build strong teams. The feedback from the participants aligned wholly with the transformational leadership theory. Ultimately, it is up to managers to apply effective strategies to reduce voluntary employee turnover, and if these findings can reduce turnover in the foodservice industry, the potential and applicability of these findings in other industries is almost limitless.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview: ____________________________

Respondent Number: ____________________________

1. Introduce self to the participant.
2. Introduce the research question, the purpose of the study and answer any initial questions the participant may have.
3. Thank the participant for their participation in the study.
4. Review the informed consent form and answer any questions the participant may have.
5. Provide the participant with a copy of the informed consent form for their personal records and review.
6. Activate the recording device.
7. Introduce the participant using their respondent number, the date and time of the interview.
8. Start the interview using the following questions.
    a. How did you influence and motivate you employees to reduce voluntary employee turnover?
    b. Did you find individual consideration to be effective at reducing voluntary employee turnover? If so, why was it effective?
    c. How did you intellectually stimulate your employees, and did you find that to be an effective strategy for reducing voluntary employee turnover?

d. What other strategies did you find effective to reduce voluntary employee turnover?

e. What barriers did you face in addressing implementing these strategies?

f. How did you overcome those barriers?

g. Did leadership styles play a role in either causing or mitigating voluntary employee turnover?

h. Could you discuss overall cause and effect of voluntary employee turnover?

9. Ask any follow-up questions.
10. End the interview and stop the recording. Explain to the participant of the member checking and transcription review process.
11. Thank the participant for the participation in the study and provide the participant with relevant contact information should they have any follow-up questions or concerns.